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1854.



V. 5

# KATE VERNON.

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## CHAPTER I.

### NEW SCENES.

KATE stood a moment transfixed, as nurse's awful words met her ear, her eyes riveted on her grandfather, but the repose of his face, almost reassured her, and, stepping back from Mrs. O'Toole's encircling arms, she exclaimed, hurriedly, angrily, but in carefully subdued tones—

“ Be silent, nurse ! do not terrify me with such strange words—see, he is asleep !”

Nurse's only reply was a burst of tears, as she laid her hand upon that of the Colonel, the fingers of which gently grasped the arm of the chair. Kate now bent down to kiss his cheek—but shrunk back from the icy touch.

“He has fainted,” she exclaimed, looking wildly round at nurse. “Bring water, and wine—send for Doctor S——.”

“I will, I will, my own child, only don't look at me that away.”

Mrs. O'Toole's violent ringing, soon brought Mrs. Crooks, and the servant.

“Go,” said Miss Vernon, who, though pale as death, was calm and stern, “send for Doctor S——, instantly, Colonel Vernon is taken very ill, he has fainted! see! Nurse thought he was dead, but I forbid any one uttering that word—until—until—go,” she exclaimed, again with the same suppressed vehemence, with which she had before spoken, “Why do you stand gazing at me? life or death depends on your speed.”

Both the frightened landlady and servant rushed from the room ; and Kate never stirred from her rigid position beside her grandfather's chair, never moved a muscle of her face, until the Doctor, who was fortunately at home, entered, and found them apparently fixed in their several positions.

A hasty glance, showed the experienced physician, that it was indeed but the lifeless clay, round which poor Kate strove to preserve the quiet, prescribed for a suffering spirit, and turning to Mrs. O'Toole, he whispered—

“ Try and get Miss Vernon out of the room.”

Her quick ear caught his words.

“ Why should I go ? I can assist you to revive him.”

“ But—but—” stammered the doctor, fairly terror struck, at the thought of all the wild grief implied by her incredulity, “ If I do not succeed ?”

“ Oh ! hush, hush, it is not two hours since

he blessed me, and said he was happy ! Grandpapa, do not you hear ? it is I—your own Kate ! Why do you make no effort to recover him ?" she exclaimed, turning almost fiercely to the doctor—" Where is your skill ? Where is your science ?"

" If you will leave the room," he returned, recovering himself. " I will do my best, but the consciousness that you, in your extreme anxiety, are watching me, will paralyse my best efforts."

" I will go then, and return in a few minutes," said Kate, retiring.

But these few minutes were employed in stretching the lifeless form on its bed ; and then nurse met her child, in an agony of tears, that told her better than words could, that she was alone in the world !

Then, at last she was convinced, she did not faint or weep, but stood quite still, regardless of the well meant words of those around her, a sudden tremour passing at intervals through

her frame ; at last, turning to those, who pressed near her, she said, in strangely quiet tones, almost a whisper, but terribly earnest—

“Leave me, I wish to be alone.” Then seeing they hesitated to leave her, she repeated with a sudden sharpness of voice and gesture of dismissal, which long remained in the memories of those who witnessed it, so expressively did it seem to reject all human aid, or sympathy : “I wish to be alone !”

They left her ; and sinking on her knees, by the bed, on which lay the form of him she loved so well, she gave herself up to the first burst of real grief, that had ever rent her heart, with its wild energy ; before, though there was fear, there was hope, though every nerve in her delicate frame trembled and shrunk from the expectation of trials, the nobler spirit dared to contemplate—there was an object for which to bear them all—an end to be attained. Now she was alone ! with none to live for—none to whom, and for whom

she was a world ! He was gone—the kind, the gentle, loving friend ; and there lay the lifeless image of him, whom she had lost, the stately prison-house, not unworthy its immortal captive, now free, and amid eternal bliss, perhaps near her, compassionating the sorrow which his already Heaven taught prescience showed was for her good ! and should her life be henceforth alone ? what was to become of her ! No longer any reason to hush regret, lest it might cloud her brow, to catch gladly at hope, the most uncertain, that she might reflect something of its glad beam ! “ Yet I would not recal him, if I could, Oh, God !” was the only ejaculation that escaped her lips, as her soul lay prostrate beneath the heavy weight thus laid upon it. The past, the present, all mingled in one strange chaos, by the pressure of a mighty grief. And the moment that her grandfather blessed her (scarce four hours ago) was already fixed amid the great events of the heart, ages back ; for sometimes, when tho-

roughly roused, and freed an instant from its fetters, the soul becomes in capacity a reflex of its great original, and in its sight, also, one day is as a thousand years.

But with the exhaustion of spirit natural to excitement so strong, came the wish for human sympathy, without which none can exist ; and groping her way to the door, through the darkness, perceived for the first time, she opened it, and was caught in the arms of Mrs. O'Toole, who, with a silent, watchful love, equalled only by Cormac's, waited, humbly ready, until that love was wanted.

“ You are all that is left me,” sobbed the poor girl, as nurse held her in her arms ; and they were the only words that escaped her lips, for the long hours through which she wept, in unutterable grief.

\* \* \* \* \*

She obeyed all nurse's suggestions with the

simplicity of a child, incapable of thinking for itself; and, at last, that faithful friend had the satisfaction of seeing her gradually sink into a sleep, still and heavy, but interrupted with deep sighs, which, at intervals, unclosed the lovely lips that seemed only formed for joyous smiles.

Then came the terrible awaking, the first unconscious exclamation—"Dear nurse, I have had such dreadful dreams!" The sober sense of waking grief—the struggle to think calmly and resignedly of all—the partial success—the sudden fresh outburst of sorrow.

So the day dragged on; and at the same hour at which Kate had last heard that voice, which had ever spoken fondly to her, a heavy travelling carriage, drawn by four posters, laden with numerous trunks and imperials, dashed in hot haste down the quiet little street. It stopped at the house of mourning; and the next moment, a tall lady, wrapped in a travelling cloak of velvet and costly furs, throw-

ing back her veil, grasped Mrs. O'Toole's hand ; and, after a piercing glance at the honest, troubled face before her, exclaimed—

“ I am too late !”

“ Not to comfort mee darlint, glory be to God ! Yer come at last, me lady ! He said you would be here this day.”

“ Kate, Miss Vernon, where is she ?” said Lady Desmond, in clear, firm tones, that sounded as if command was natural to them ; and passing on to the stairs.

“ No, no ! me sweet child is here.”

And Mrs. O'Toole opened the parlour door, Kate, at the moment, entering from the inner room. She stopped, for an instant, while Lady Desmond advanced rapidly, and clasped her to her heart, straining her closely in her arms.

“ Oh ! Georgy,” cried Kate, amid her sobs, “ you will never hear his voice again—he is gone ! gone before a gleam of hope or prosperity brightened the sad evening of his life ; before I could see him as he was, before the

bitter dregs of the cup of adversity had lost their bitterness by use. And I could do nothing for him, nothing ! Oh, when we parted last, who, who could have thought, that it would have ended thus ?”

And she pointed expressively to the small, mean room, now dimly lighted, by the candles, which Mrs. O'Toole scrupulously kept burning after evening closed.

Lady Desmond, grasping Kate's hand nervously, walked to the bed-side, and holding back the folds of her veil, bent reverently over the dead, for a moment, in silence, then drawing back, broke into an agony of hysterical tears, that startled Kate, by its vehemence, and brought nurse rapidly to her side.

“ I feel as if guilty of his death,” she repeated. “ Why, why, did I delay my return ?”

“ Oh, hush, dearest Georgy, hush,” whispered Kate, somewhat calmed, by witnessing the remorseful emotion of her cousin. “ I was

wrong to speak as I did ; it was the sharpness of sorrow made me utter such words ; God forgive them, for in my inmost heart I feel that He never punishes, He only sends messengers after us to keep us in the right path ; the poverty was nothing ; and even this ! we shall yet understand it all !”

They stood there in silence, nurse supporting Lady Desmond, who leant against her, her bonnet thrown aside, her luxuriant black hair drawn back from her lofty forehead, her large dark eyes dilated, as if her soul gazed through them far away. Kate, a smile struggling through the tears streaming from hers, and one hand slightly raised towards Heaven. The three figures symbolising well, homely humanity, with its quiet necessary fortitude. Intellect and refinement, with their larger capacity, for joy or for suffering, and faith, so often almost extinguished, amid sorrow and doubt, yet still preserving a ray of everlasting hope.

But Lady Desmond was overpowered by the fatigue of a rapid and frequently obstructed journey, performed in a fever of anxiety ; and Kate's attention was beneficially attracted from her all engrossing subject of thought to her cousin's evident exhaustion. She wished much to remove Kate at once from what she considered her wretched lodging, to her hotel, but this Kate resolutely refused to comply with.

“It is the last sad duty I can pay him,” she said, “not to quit his remains until they are carried to their last home !”

Lady Desmond, therefore, determined to stay with her ; and Mrs. Crook's establishment were put to their wits' end by the mingled excitement of a death, and a ladyship in a carriage-and-four.

Recovered from her fatigue, by a night's rest, Lady Desmond devoted herself to the care of her young cousin, with all the eagerness of a passionate nature, remorseful for the

past ; but though she hushed Kate to sleep each night in her arms, she performed every task that could by possibility devolve on Miss Vernon, such as attending to the details of the funeral, &c., with a diligence and tact that spared Kate many a pang ; it was the latter who, amid her own absorbing grief, found time and gentle wisdom, wherewith to calm the sudden bursts of sorrow which often welled up from the heart of that proud, but generous and impulsive woman, who ever rushing into extremes, found food for self-reproach in every little incident which either nurse or Kate betrayed, of their life, for the last year.

“ It was so obstinate, so unkindly obstinate of you not to join me at Florence ; God only knows how much it might have spared ; yet that was no excuse for my selfish negligence ; though, Kate, I had powerful inducements not to return to England, I will—perhaps I may yet tell you them, and you will then understand me.”

The day after the funeral, that renewal of death and sorrow, Kate readily acceded to her cousin's wish to leave the spot, no longer sanctified by the inanimate presence of him they had lost. And it was with a dull feeling of weariness, as if even the capacity of suffering had been worn out, that she threw herself into the carriage that was to take her away from the scene of her late bereavement. All was now over, nothing more to be done ; and all she longed for was silence, solitude, and sleep.

“Come to the hotel as soon as you possibly can. Miss Vernon looks terribly cut up ; she will want you to comfort her,” was Lady Desmond’s last injunction to Mrs. O’Toole, who remained behind to settle all the final affairs of packing and payment.

“I will, me lady,” returned Mrs. O’Toole, who had found some consolation in the handsome appointments of the hearse and mourning coaches, which the day before had carried the

remains of her beloved master to the grave ; and re-entering the house, she immediately applied herself to her task. "How'll I iver get the dog away ?" she asked, when about to depart.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Mrs. Crook ; "he's done nothing but wander about the house all day, and whine so piteous-like every time he went into the poor old gentleman's room !"

"Faith, I thought he'd have ate up the undertaker's min whin they kem into the room. Ah, God help us, is it any wondher me sweet young lady's heart is broke, whin the dumb baste itself knows what we have lost ; where is he now ?"

"I don't know, I'm sure ; I've not seen him these two hours."

Mrs. O'Toole went in search of him to what had been the Colonel's bed-room ; and there, stretched by the bed he had so long watched,

lay the old hound, his limbs quivering in the agonies of death.

“Och ! Cormac ! you’re not dyin’ ?”

The noble dog strove to raise his head in answer to her voice, but it fell back, and he was dead.

“Och, Cormac ! me poor Cormac !” cried Mrs. O’Toole, her scarce dried tears flowing afresh ; “but you wur the thtrue hearted dog ! Sure, there was somethin’ inside iv ye far betther than many a man’s heart. Och, how’ll I iver tell Miss Kate that ye couldn’t stop afther yer ould masther was gone ?”

But Lady Desmond wisely determined that Kate should not hear of Cormac’s death until she made enquiries for him ; and Kate lay in perfect quiet for several days, rarely speaking, and never alluding to the sad scenes she had so lately gone through, though often the large tears would pour unconsciously down her cheeks, and when, at last, the intelligence of

poor Cormac's death was communicated to her, she received it with a burst of grief, seemingly disproportioned to the occasion. All her sorrow was revived by the death of this faithful follower, so closely associated in her mind, not only with her lamented grandfather, but with her own earliest and happiest days.

One morning, as Lady Desmond and nurse were standing in silent concern, by her bedside, noticing sadly the deep traces of grief on her young face, she suddenly roused herself from the species of lethargy into which she had fallen, and stretching out her hand to Lady Desmond, said—

“Forgive me, Georgina, forgive me, nurse, I am very selfish and wrong to lie here so indolently; I will endeavour to do better, to be resigned. I will get up and go out in the carriage with you, Georgy, if you wish.”

From that day, Kate strove diligently to keep her self-imposed promise, and gradually time, the healer, accustomed her to think, with

calm, though unutterably tender sadness, of the dear and venerated relative she had lost.

But she almost loathed the state and luxury amid which she now lived, remembering the petty privations which had depressed and mortified the last weary hours of his life. Often the erring child of earth, groping in the dim twilight of imperfect faith, would raise her heart to Heaven in silent supplication for forgiveness, at these half involuntary murmurs ; it is so hard to believe that the sorrows laid upon a beloved and revered object, are not “too heavy.” We all know the deep-rooted sin and error of our *own* hearts, which lie hidden from mortal eye, how much they require chastisement and guidance, but the life that to us seems blameless, the kindly nature, to our eyes, a model for us to follow ! Oh, how inscrutable seem the trials we could comprehend if directed to our own discipline.

It was with a stronger sensation of pleasure than she had known for many days, that Kate

heard her cousin propose their removal from the mighty capital, now rapidly gathering together its beauty and its strength, its fashion and its political hosts.

“Is there any place you would prefer, dear Kate,” she asked, one evening as they sat together, after their quickly despatched dinner, (Lady Desmond had, after much solicitation, consented to accompany an old Neapolitan acquaintance to the opera, and was now waiting for her friend’s carriage.)

“No, none,” replied Kate, indolently, “all I care for is to leave London; though, dearest Georgy, it is by no means insupportable to me, if you wish to stay.”

“It has no attraction for me,” said Lady Desmond, “Ireland would be painful to you now, and though I long to take you abroad, you will enjoy a visit to France or Germany much more a few months hence; besides, I would rather not leave England at present.

“Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell was sitting

with me this morning," she resumed, after a pause, during which she played thoughtfully with the tassels of her Cashmere cloak. " You don't know her, she was related to poor Sir Thomas, and beside that, her husband was an old brother-in-arms of his. When General Macdonnell died, his widow was left almost penniless, and so they gave her apartments at Hampton Court Palace; she tells me it is a pleasant, quiet place for a month or two; pretty rides and drives near town if you want to see any one, or any thing—out of the way if you are misanthropically inclined. In short, she is very anxious to get me down there; she is in wretched health, and if it is practicable, I should like to gratify her; she was most kind to me, poor thing, in her palmy days, when I was an inexperienced bride. Would you like the locale, Kate?"

" Who, I ?" said Kate, absently, " yes, very much."

" Well then, I will go down there to-mor-

row, and see the place, and Lady Elizabeth ; to tell the truth, for I must not take credit for more philanthropy than I possess, though I do not wish to remain in London, I feel a reluctance to leave its neighbourhood—it is strange," and Lady Desmond relapsed into silence and thought, a look of impatience slightly contracting her brow, and changing the expression of her resolute mouth to one of dissatisfaction and unrest.

Kate gazed at her in the indolent speculation of a mind too depressed for activity of thought, as to what cause of vexation could possibly ruffle the prosperous current of her cousin's life.

" Mr. ———'s carriage," announced a spruce waiter.

And kissing her fair god-child, and bidding her an affectionate good-night, Lady Desmond swept out of the room, leaving Kate to the care of Mrs. O'Toole.

In less than a fortnight after this conver-

sation, the cousins were settled in a large old fashioned house, adjoining the Palace of Hampton Court, Lady Desmond's well filled purse, and her major domo's tact and intelligence, supplying all the deficiencies of a ready-furnished mansion, with the celerity of modern magic. The above mentioned functionary, an old attendant of the late Sir Thomas, was, as Lady Desmond termed him, her steward, rather than her servant ; he arranged her household, paid her bills, and tyrannised over her in a thousand ways, to which, in full consciousness of her weakness, she languidly submitted.

April was well advanced when they took possession of their new abode, and most gladly did Kate exchange her daily lifeless airing in the Park, for walks amid the thousand blossoms which adorned the Palace Gardens, with all the freshness and perfume of early spring.

The stately parterres, the mossy grass, and the first delicate exquisite green of the trees, the lovely avenue of horse chesnuts in the

neighbouring park, all were new to her, all unlike any scene she was accustomed to, and unconnected in her mind with suffering; passionately enjoying the sights and sounds, and scent of a garden, at this, its loveliest season, she felt drawn out of herself by the contemplation of so much beauty; grief was softened to sadness, by this evidence of Almighty love! the past engrossed her less completely, it was so uncongenial with the smiles and tears of April, the anticipative joyousness of all nature, and no longer apprehensive of losing self-command by approaching the subject uppermost in her thoughts, she found a quiet pleasure in constant talk of her grandfather, of his opinions and sayings, and even of his death with a composure that might have misled a superficial observer as to her real feelings.

She now gathered courage to write a long descriptive letter to Mr. and Mrs. Winter, in return for the truly affectionate missives they

had written, on hearing, through Langley, of the Colonel's death. Some other writing, also, devolved upon her, replies to *relations*, cognisant of her existence, since she had become the inmate of the prosperous Lady Desmond. These were soon despatched, and she felt somewhat of a blank from the absence of all necessary employment. She still claimed immunity from the little ceremonious, scandalous re-unions of the palace; and Lady Desmond, far too impatient by nature to endure restraint, made her gentle cousin's mourning an excuse for rejecting the distasteful invitations. Indeed Kate could not help observing, that, for an invalid, Lady Elizabeth took a wonderful interest in mundane affairs; and, although she had recommended Hampton Court to Lady Desmond, as a quiet retired place, she was perpetually suggesting a little society, as a panacea for every ill, and she felt an instinctive dislike to her cousin's noble relative, who always addressed her with the same carressing condescen-

sion, she might have shown to a pet terrier, belonging to her respected *wealthy* kinswoman.

“A thousand apologies, dear Kate,” cried Lady Desmond, as she made her appearance one lovely May evening, half an hour after their usual time for dinner, “I fear I have kept you waiting, but I could not tear myself from Mrs. Fordyce and her lovely flowers; you must go with me on my next visit, her villa is so perfect, and Richmond looked so bright.” Kate smiled, pleased to see her cousin so animated, and secretly wondering what could be the reason of the joy that sparkled in her large, dark eyes, and lent so much of soul and brilliancy to her generally proud, calm countenance. “And,” continued Lady Desmond, “as the carriage turned out of the gate, it was stopped by almost the last person I expected to meet on the banks of the Thames, an Italian acquaintance, the Wentworths and myself used to see a great

deal of, at Naples. You have heard of Lord Effingham?"

Kate shook her head.

"He was universally known in Italy, and here too; he seemed quite as much astonished to meet me, and promised, he would ride over some morning — he said, he had a villa on the Thames, I think, but I was in too great a hurry to attend."

Lady Desmond was more than usually affectionate to Kate that evening, stroking her glossy hair, with the fondness of an elder sister, and exerting all her powers of persuasion to induce her to join a tea-party, at Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell's; and Kate, fearful of being a check upon her cousin's amusements, and conscious that she had no right to exclusive self-indulgence, consented; nor could she regret having done so, as Lady Desmond appeared to be much gratified.

The day after this unwonted exertion she

had taken a long walk with Lady Desmond, who, in her happiest mood, had entered into a charming description of her life in Italy, of Rome, and her impression of it—of the high opinion entertained by various Englishmen (whom she had met abroad), of rank and reputation, for Colonel Vernon; and Kate's heart and intellect alike gratified, submitted with reluctance to her cousin's decision, that she had walked enough, and must rest at home, while she paid a promised visit at the palace.

Lady Desmond, after opening a box of new books and periodicals, just arrived, stepped through the window, to a balcony, communicating by a flight of steps with the garden, and passed through a side gate directly into the palace grounds.

Kate took up Dickens's last number, and was soon wrapt in the perusal of it. Slightly fatigued by exercise, she leaned back in her fauteuil, one hand buried in the rich masses of her hair, on which the light threw a

thousand golden gleams—the other holding the book, she read against the arm of the chair, on which her right elbow rested; one fairy foot stretched out upon a tiny ottoman; an air of profound repose, and perfect quiet pervading the slight figure and sweet face, always grave in silence, and now more so than ever; while the soft liquid eyes, with their thoughtful depth of expression, rivetted on the page before them, were brightened by the faint tinge of rose called up by her animating walk.

Lady Desmond might have been gone about half an hour, when a gentleman, mounted on a dark brown horse, of great beauty, rode up to the hall door, and dismounting, wound the reins round some of the spiral ornaments of the old fashioned iron railing.

“Is Lady Desmond at home?”

“Yes, sir.” And the stranger followed the servant up the broad stairs. “Who shall I say, sir?”

“Lord Effingham.”

But the large, low drawing-room, was unoccupied, and placing a chair, the footman retired to announce the visitor. He stood a moment after he was thus left, then strolled to the window, which looked towards the green; but finding little to interest him in the prospect, after a careless glance at one or two pictures, and some exquisite miniatures, which lay on the tables, he walked through the open door, leading into a smaller room within, which opened on the park; and here he stood, as if rooted to the ground—his every faculty absorbed in the contemplation of the living picture before him—till Kate, with that instinct which whispers to us, when a fellow mortal is near, slowly raised her fringed lids, and looked at him a moment, bewildered; then rising, her natural, well-bred, self-possession, heightened by the calmness and indifference consequent on pre-occupation, and the stillness that follows deep emotion—

“I fear I kept you too long waiting; my cousin, Lady Desmond has unfortunately just left me, to pay a visit at the Palace. I will send for her.” And she laid her hand on the bell-pull.

The stranger stood a moment, in silence, an unwonted look of irresolution, on his haughty countenance; then, bowing with profound respect, he begged pardon for his intrusion, in soft and refined tones, which, as also his face, grew strangely familiar to Kate’s memory, as she looked and listened.

“Pray do not give Lady Desmond the trouble of returning,” he said, with a degree of hesitation, marvellously at variance with his air of *un grand seigneur*.”

Here a servant entered.

“Her ladyship is not at home, my lord, I did not know she had gone out again.”

“I see her returning across the garden,” said Miss Vernon, “she will be here immediately,” and pointing to a chair, she bent

her head gravely to the visitor, and left the room.

He remained gazing after her, then muttering to himself, "most surpassingly novel-like, by Minerva," turned to greet Lady Desmond as she entered, with an easy grace and quiet firmness of manner, very different from the demeanour he had exhibited to her gentle, unassuming cousin.

## CHAPTER II

## LADY DESMOND.

A SKETCH of the life and character of the lady, whose name stands at the head of this chapter, is necessary for the right understanding of what follows ; so while she talks of Italian skies, and her reminiscences of Naples with her reserved visitor, whose well timed observations and profound attention drew forth her most brilliant conversational powers, we will draw upon the reader's imagination, and transport her or him, to the West of Ireland, twenty years back from the period of which we write. Dungar was then at its highest point of gaiety

and apparent prosperity, when intelligence reached Colonel Vernon of the death, at sea, of a certain Lieutenant O'Brien, of whom he had an indistinct recollection, as having incurred the displeasure and disapprobation of a large circle of relatives, amongst whom the Colonel himself was numbered, by eloping, and consequent marriage, with a very beautiful but low-born and penniless girl.

Of course the hundred cousins, never having done anything, “worthy of death or bonds,” themselves, were unanimous as to their right of casting, not only the first, but the last stone at the imprudent couple, who were left to expiate in unpitied and unmitigated poverty the unpardonable error they had committed.

Colonel Vernon's knowledge of O'Brien's circumstances was very limited; he knew he had lost his wife when their only child was still a mere baby, and he had, more than once, unsought, sent handsome presents to the improvident father; but the news of his decease

was soon forgotten, in the terrible affliction which threw a shadow over Dungar, for many months. The Colonel's eldest son, the only survivor of three children, a wild, extravagant young scapegrace, of whom none, save his wife and his father, prophesied good, was drowned in some fishing expedition, a sudden squall having capsized his boat. Kate was born a few weeks after her unfortunate father was lost, and, although Mrs. Vernon, for her child's sake, strove to drag on a saddened and debilitated existence, she died while Kate was yet too young to remember a mother's caresses.

The Colonel was just beginning to rally from the severe trial which had robbed him of a son, who, though often a source of anxiety and mortification, was still very dear to him, when some gossiping guest mentioned having seen "that unfortunate O'Brien's little daughter" at the house of an aunt, whose close connection with the deceased Lieutenant, could not permit her to ignore the demand of a much

enduring school-mistress, that Miss O'Brien should be removed, as she could not afford to encumber herself with a young lady who had no claims on her charity. " You may imagine the sort of life the unhappy little devil leads," concluded the Colonel's informant, " snubbed, by her aunt, cuffed by her cousins, a perfect *souffre douleur* for the whole family."

Colonel Vernon made no remark at the time, but the picture of the little orphan, thus carelessly drawn, sank deep into his kindly heart, already softened by his recent bereavement.

A hospitable invitation was despatched for the friendless girl, and Georgina O'Brien was soon established in what proved to be her happy home. The Colonel's natural kindness, first attracted to her because she stood in need of it, was confirmed by the little girl's winning ways and dauntless spirit. She was about twelve years old when she first made her appearance at Dungar ; tall, thin, sallow, her pale face looked all eyes, and strangers were almost

startled at the wild, shy, proud, restlessness of those large, dark orbs that appeared constantly on the alert to resent insult or fly from injury. Gradually all this softened in the balmy atmosphere of gentleness and good breeding, which was soon imbibed by the young stranger, whose bearing, from the first, though hers had been a childhood of galling poverty, bespoke an innate grandeur and dignity, inexpressibly attractive to her patrician host.

Soon it became a pleasing divertissement to the Colonel's sombre thoughts, to teach Georgy her lessons, and undo much that had been done at Fogarty's "select establishment," Mellefort View, Kingstown. He found an apt pupil, though scarcely so diligent as she proved to Pat Costello, the huntsman, who, in rapturous admiration of her firm seat, steady hand, and intuitive comprehension of his instructions, exclaimed to the whipper. "Faith, Miss Georgy's the raal ould stock; sure enough, it comes quite nathral to her to ride, there's

nothin', good nor bad, would stop her ; if any one would take Craig na Dhioul, be the powers she'd rise her horse at Croagh Pathrick !”

To the Colonel, the huntsman, nurse, and little Kate, the whole stream of her affections flowed ; but though she would willingly send the greater part of all that she possessed as gifts to her cousins, who had tyrannized over and insulted her ; the air of supreme indifference, of quiet civility with which she treated them, on those rare occasions when they met, was much more calculated to impress them with the idea, that they were far too insignificant for their misconduct to occupy her memory than that they were forgiven. Indeed Mrs. O'Toole used often to say that, “ though she would lay down her life for a friend, the devil himself could not be more scornful to an inemy.”

After young Mrs. Vernon's death, the Colonel engaged a governess of higher acquirements than could have been necessary for his baby

grand-child, in order that the Lieutenant's orphan might have the advantages of a good education ; but amid the irregularity of a household, without a female head, Georgy's imperious ways, and resolute will, enabled her to gain a degree of authority, marvellous in one so young, and displeasing to many of the old retainers, who, nevertheless, bore this assumption of authority, on the part of a dependent, far more unmurmuringly than a similar class in England, would have done. The rigid maxim of working for oneself, however incontrovertible, and admirably suited to national independence, and advancement, is capable of some cruel and unjust applications ; and if the sense of independence may be somewhat wanting, in Ireland, there is, at all events, more indulgence--more tolerance--more kindness for those, with whom fortune has dealt hardly ; and it was seldom--very seldom, even Miss O'Brien's keen glance, rendered by early experience morbidly quick at discovering an insult,

could perceive even covert disrespect. And so she progressed into luxuriantly beautiful girlhood, unpruned, almost unchecked ; already ambitious, she knew not for what—already pining to leave the happy valley, where she had found so tranquil a haven, from the rude storms that shook her infancy—the recollection of the sufferings, and mortifications of her early youth; had sunk deep into her proud heart, and longed to obtain some vantage ground, secured and self-acquired, from which she might look down upon the past—some social eminence, independent even of her kind, beloved, self-constituted guardian. Nor did she long revolve these wishes, in silent, wistful reverie, amongst the bold cliffs, or in the deep, shady glens, with which the country about Dungar abounded, and which might have taught her truer and purer aspirations.

Kate was a mere plaything—confidante, she had none—she was too young to find in books, sufficient canpanionship ; when just as the

dearth of excitement, and occupation was most oppressive, Major General Sir Thomas Desmond, K.C.B., arrived on a visit to Colonel Vernon.

There was a scarcity of ladies at Dungar, when Sir Thomas Desmond made his appearance ; and the Colonel, banishing Georgina, as too young to take any part in society, to Kate's particular region, the nursery and school-room, collected a shooting party for the General's entertainment.

It was therefore more than probable, that he would leave, without ever encountering the "concealed jewel," of the old mansion, but it was otherwise fated.

Wearied of her unusual seclusion, Miss O'Brien, one fine autumn morning, having watched the departure of the whole party, to shoot or fish, summoned her faithful squire, Pat Costello, and mounting a favourite hunter of the Colonel's, started on a long ride over the wildest part of the wild country round. Occu-

pied by her own thoughts, she forgot time and distance, nor was it till honest Pat ventured to hint, that “ maybe, Miss Kate would be cryin’ for her,” that she thought of returning.

“ It must be getting late, Pat—see, the sun is behind Craughmore.”

“ It is so, miss.”

“ Let us cross the Priest’s field, and get into the lawn that way, the mare will take any of those fences—eh, Pat ?”

“ Is it the mare ? God bless ye, she’d walk over them without knowing it, miss.”

Miss O’Brien turned her horse’s head without reply, and gradually quickening her pace, from a trot to a canter, from a canter to a gallop, finding a wild pleasure, in the rapid and easy movement of the beautiful animal, on which she was mounted, cleared the last fence which separated the priest’s domains, from her guardian’s, just as Sir Thomas Desmond, and two or three other gentlemen, the latest of the

party were hastening their return to dinner, after a capital day's sport.

"Ha! Colonel," exclaimed Sir Thomas, who narrowly escaped being overturned. "The race of Amazons is not yet extinct in the west, I perceive."

"Georgina!" cried the Colonel. "I had no idea you were out, and on Brown Bess too! She will pull your arms off, my dear girl. Pat, I'm surprised you would let Miss O'Brien ride so fiery an animal."

"Do not blame Pat, dearest Colonel — of course he did as I liked; besides, I can ride every horse in your stable."

"And Pat would be more than mortal if he could refuse your commands," quoth the gallant General, with the gay manner, so often assumed by gentlemen of a certain age, to very young girls.

"Sir Thomas Desmond, my dear Georgy, is returning thanks that his life was spared, in that desperate leap of yours."

“I fear I nearly rode over you,” said she, addressing the veteran, who stood gazing with admiration at her beautiful face, glowing with the rich color, imparted by her gallop—her luxuriant black hair falling in masses from under her hat, and her large dark eyes beaming with the excitement of her own thoughts, though little shown by the careless ease of her manner. “I fear I almost rode over you.”

“Pray do not mention it; what is an old general more or less, compared to the gratification of so charming a young lady’s taste for crossing the country?”

“You will forgive me?” said she smiling.

“Georgy, you know Mr. ——, and Lord Arthur,” said the Colonel, waving his hand towards the other gentlemen of the party, and Miss O’Brien acknowledged them with a careless grace, a certain, wild, natural dignity, that did not escape the observant Sir Thomas.

From this time, the General constantly, and

avowedly sought the society of his host's *protégée*; and she, pleased by his kindly admiration, and flattered by the notice of an individual in his distinguished position, found a new charm in the rides and walks she was beginning to tire of.

But never, in her dreams of the future, had she an instant thought of using matrimony as a stepping stone to position; and the pleasant, polite *Chevalier Bayard*, but elderly General, whom she looked upon as a second Colonel Vernon, and of whom, in a short time she made a confidant, was the last person she would have dreamt of espousing—meantime Sir Thomas prolonged his visit, and when at length he departed, leaving Georgina, inconsolable for his loss—it was only for a short period.

His return was heralded by the announcement in Saunders' Newspaper of the death of the Dowager Countess of C——, “who has, we understand bequeathed large estates, both here and in England, to her ladyship's nephew,

Sir Thomas Desmond, K.C.B., who served with great distinction at —, &c., &c."

Miss O'Brien, overjoyed as she was to see him again, could not help being struck by an indefinable change of manner in her faithful ally. He seemed more deferential and less gaily cordial ; still she was unspeakably astonished, when, after a few words of, to her, unintelligible preamble, Colonel Vernon, in a private and solemn interview, informed her that Sir Thomas Desmond had made proposals to him for her hand, as her guardian and next friend.

"I confess I was a good deal startled when he broached the subject," continued the Colonel ; "nevertheless, Georgy, I would have you weigh the proposition ; there are few men who would show such disinterestedness as to fly back to lay his newly-acquired fortune at the feet of an obscure though very charming girl ; and although the disparity—"

"I have made up my mind," said Miss

O'Brien, deliberately, as if of her own thoughts, and deaf to the Colonel—"I will accept him."

"But," returned the Colonel, not quite satisfied with this hasty decision, "have you thought of the consequences of a marriage with a man old enough to be your father? can you give him your whole heart? Take a little time, dear Georgy. You have, I trust, a comfortable home here, where you will be always welcome; do not rush on anything that may hereafter prove repugnant; are your affections your own? is—"

"Dear, kind, considerate guardian, yes. Who could I have lost them to? The young lordlings, the county squires, who assiduously avoid the penniless girl, too well protected to be trifled with? no, I never yet thought of loving Sir Thomas; but I will love him heartily; he has the soul of a man, and dares to consult his heart in his choice of a wife. I have something in common with such a soul;

I will make him happy, ay, and proud too, though his lot may be cast amongst the nobles of the land."

And drawing her splendid form to its full height, she glanced proudly at the opposite mirror.

"Then I may tell Sir Thomas you accept him? With your proper appreciation of his worth you will be a happy woman; I congratulate you, my dear love."

And they were married; and Kate was bridesmaid; the tenantry were feasted; bonfires blazed, &c., &c.

But did the young and beautiful bride find her heart thus obedient to her will? Heaven alone knows. During the eight or nine years of their union, however, Sir Thomas and Lady Desmond led a halcyon life; and if she ever felt a void in her brilliant existence, she scarce had time, amid her varied pleasures or occupations, to note it. True and deep was the sorrow with which she mourned for the kind

husband, the considerate friend, for whom alone she seemed to live; but these long years of unbroken prosperity had not softened the imperious will which distinguished her girlhood; while they somewhat tainted, with their hardening influence, the warmth of heart formerly so true and so unselfish. Meantime, the full leisure of an unoccupied spirit was devoted to the cultivation of intellect, more brilliant than profound, and accustomed to scorn, as interested, the motives of the other sex, her fancy was still unawakened, her strong, deep passions still slept, when the fated current of her life led her to Naples.

At this time, Lord Effingham was the engrossing subject of scandal and gossip at Naples; his luxurious villa, rarely opened to any, save a few select companions, his unrivalled yacht, his strange and almost lawless doings, indicative of a character half cynic, half epicurean, but wholly English in its energy and profusion, each furnished an inexhaustible theme of won-

der and exaggeration, to the opera boxes and conversaziones. Rarely he honoured the *beau-monde* of Naples with his presence; but shortly after Lady Desmond's arrival, some national anniversary dinner, at the English Ambassador's, drew him from his seclusion; and whether he found society more agreeable, after this interval of retirement, or that the proud indifference of Lady Desmond's manner interested a fancy cloyed by adulation, is problematical; but from that period he was more frequently to be met in the brilliant circles adorned by the presence of the beautiful widow, but whether the slumber of her heart, had been broken by the eccentric Englishman, before whose commanding spirit her own involuntarily bent, none could tell, though Mrs. Wentworth surmised.

“But even Italy one tires of,” said Lord Effingham, rising to depart after a lengthened visit; “and I confess I am ready to try England, at least, while summer and the novelty

of my late revered uncle's villa last ; besides, had I been undecided, your presence would have fixed me."

Lady Desmond smiled.

"I fear I frightened away a very studious young lady, whom I found deep in the perusal of some trash—Dickens, I believe," taking up the number Kate had been reading.

"My cousin, Miss Vernon—poor Kate is not in the mood for any profound literature ; she has had great sorrows. But I trust you will sometimes look in on us, it will do us both good."

"I shall certainly make my *début* in the, to me, new character of consoler."

And he bowed ironically.

"My sweet god-daughter will teach you not to be satirical—she is so good."

"Your god-daughter ! why you could not have learned your own catechism when she was christened."

“I was very young, and was only a proxy ; but I have called her my god-chi'd ever since.”

“Well, *addio* Lady Desmond, I will bring you some flowers to-morrow ; I see you have no conservatory.”

And he departed.

Kate was rather startled by the expression, half fright, half exultation in Mrs. O'Toole's countenance, as she entered her room before dinner, to assist her in dressing.

“Och thin, Miss Kate, agraah ; who do you think has just rode off, on a horse fit for a prence ?”

“I am sure I cannot imagine. Oh, Lord Effingham, I suppose.”

“ Didn't I tell ye, he was a lord ? faith, I niver was mistaken in wan yet ; and fur all I spoke up so bould, ses I to meself, he's a lord, no less.”

“But, nurse, what do you mean ? who did you speak up bold to ?”

“To the earl there, him that has jist rode off.”

“Where?” demanded Kate, fearful of some strange outbreak on the part of Mrs. O’Toole.

“There, in that banishmint we wor in, at that onlooky Bayswather, whin he wanted me to take the note to ye.”

“Why, dear nurse, you do not mean to—Oh, yes, now I recollect, I thought his face and voice were familiar to me. I was dull, very dull, not to notice it before; he is the same person who spoke to me in Kensington Gardens.”

“An’ did he spake to ye to-day, jewil?”

“Yes; and now I remember, he seemed embarrassed; it is curious; perhaps I ought to mention it to Georgina; yet, no, it would be useless; he amuses her now; and she is just the person who would resent such conduct, warmly. No, I am but a sorry companion as it is; but I will interfere with her amusement as little as I can.”

“ Faith, ye'r in the right iv it, Miss Kate ; for all Lady Desmond loves ye, she loves her own way betther nor all the world itself.”

“ Hush, hush, you must not speak in that way of our kind, good friend, nurse.”

“ Well, well, it's thruth I'm tellin' ye ; an' see, jewil, ye'll think it quare to be spakin' cool an' asy to that thief iv the world, though he looks like a prence, an' rides like a king.”

“ Queer ! Oh, no, I feel as if that adventure happened years ago ; that I have grown old and dispassionate since. Then he will never notice me, when Georgy is there ; at least, not much ; and, I confess, I feel pleased that he should meet me, in my natural position ; but his presence, and the memories it calls up, will never be very welcome to me, now especially.”

“ Well, we'll see, there's the devil's own timper in thim fiery eyes iv his. I'll go bail he's a dead shot with the pistils.”

“Very likely ; but there is the dinner bell.”

Lady Desmond was thoughtful and *distrait* ; that evening ; she spoke little of Lord Effingham, and only conversed by an effort. After tea, she entreated Kate, who had already recommenced her practising, to sing some of the airs she had been arranging previous to her grandfather’s death ; and Kate, anxious to conquer the repugnance she had felt of late to her favourite occupation, complied, till the tears pouring down her cheeks interrupted her.

“Dearest, forgive me,” cried Lady Desmond, roused from her thoughts by the sudden cessation of the music, and flying to her side, “how selfish, how thoughtless I am,” and winding her arm round Kate’s waist, drew her to the window, through which the moonlight streamed, and the breeze wafted a thousand perfumes.

They stood there a few moments in silence, till Kate, recovering her composure, pressed a

kiss upon her cousin's cheek. Lady Desmond started, and a sudden tremor ran through her frame.

“ You are cold, dear Georgy ? come from the window.”

“ Oh, no, no ! I wish I was cold and calm ! Ah, Kate, I am not happy ! I would fain change with you !”

“ With me ! surely not with one so lonely and ——.”

“ Lonely ! Who can be more lonely than I am ? You have been so much loved ; I would give any thing for even the memory of such affection, as the dear Colonel had, for you ; some one to live for, some one to die for, who would understand your every glance !”

“ But, dearest Georgy, you had all this in your husband !”

“ Yes ! Oh, heaven forgive my forgetfulness, but now I feel so wearied with this vain struggle ! If I had been blessed with children I should have something to live for.” She

paused and pressed her hand against her eyes.  
“Come, I will give myself rest and freedom, I  
will live for you, and you only, my Kate, you  
shall be my daughter.”

And she held her with a wild firm pressure  
to her heart.

And Kate, puzzled by this unaccountable  
outbreak, returned her embrace, silently pray-  
ing to God to direct her beautiful but way-  
ward kinswoman aright.

## CHAPTER III.

## OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

LORD EFFINGHAM'S visits were constant and apparently welcome, for Kate soon began to observe a restlessness in her cousin, when the hour at which he usually made his appearance passed without his arrival. At first, Kate had taken her work or book to her own room or to the Palace Garden, when his name was announced, but Lady Desmond had soon cut off her retreat by observing—

“ You must act chaperone for me, dear Kate, but if strangers are so repugnant to you, I will

tell Lord Effingham, and he shall not come here any more."

And Miss Vernon knew very well, whatever her inclination might be, what was expected. Yet there was much in their visitor's conversation that drew her out of herself, and interested her by force of contrast to her own views, although the indolence of depression rendered her averse to the exertion of argument. Besides, Lord Effingham was often apparently unconscious of her presence, and scarcely ever addressed himself to her, so much so, that Lady Desmond had thought herself called upon to make a sort of apology for him.

Yet Kate more than once caught his eyes fixed upon herself, and felt that her few occasional observations were listened to with an attention all the deeper for its unobtrusiveness; in short, she felt certain he remembered her, and watched for some indication, either of consciousness or resentment on her part, while

each day rendered her more at ease, as she observed his attentions to her cousin.

The quiet routine of their lives was seldom interrupted.

Lady Desmond sometimes went to town, and generally Lord Effingham's name figured in the same list of distinguished fashionables present at balls, dinners, &c., with her own. Kate began to think that their present intercourse had fallen into a natural channel of indifference, and that the bold stranger of Kensington Gardens, was totally merged in the high-bred reserved earl ; but she was mistaken.

One morning a feverish cold confined Lady Desmond to her bed, and the Hampton Court doctor threatened her with every ill "that flesh is heir to," if she did not, by care and submission to a few days seclusion, nip the growing disorder in the bud. Kate was anxious and uneasy about her, the very thought of a sick room made her heart ache.

“ Do not look so unhappy about me, love,” said her cousin, it is my will to remain here ; I want solitude, I want freedom from external influences ; you shall read to me good books.”

“ Milord, his compliments, is very unhappy to hear your ladyship is ill, and begs to know particularly how you are.”

“ Oh ! Kate, run down to him, will you, dearest, say I am too unwell to see him, for a week to come, at least ; you will—observe—there go, darling.”

Kate obeyed, neither with alacrity or reluctance, Lord Effingham had almost ceased to be connected in her mind with the audacious stranger who had addressed her, and although this was the first time she had met him alone, since that occurrence, it was with perfect composure she returned his salute, and met his eager scrutinising glance without a shade more of colour tinging her pale cheek.

“ I am inconsolable at hearing of Lady

Desmond's indisposition," said Lord Effingham, before Kate could address a word to him. "How did she catch cold? Has she good advice!"

"I do not think her very ill," replied Miss Vernon, "a little care and quiet is all she requires; but she desires me to say, she fears she will not be able to see you for some days; next week, if you should be in this neighbourhood, probably you will find her reinstated in our usual morning room."

"Of course I shall make enquiries every day for the health of my charming friend."

And as Kate could not avoid thinking there was something of a sneer in the smile and tone with which these words were spoken, they revived all her antipathy to the dark browed peer. Anxious to dismiss him, yet not wishing to show it, she stood a moment, undecided, when Lord Effingham, with a sudden change of voice and expression, from the measured

tone and listless look, with which he usually spoke, to one of animation and earnestness, exclaimed—

“No, Miss Vernon, I cannot go yet, though you indicate your desire that I should, by standing. I cannot let the opportunity, I have so long sought, pass, without ascertaining whether your memory is as imperfect as mine is vivid.”

“I you mean,” returned Miss Vernon, raising her eyes to his with the calmness now so habitual to her, “if you mean that you met me before, and that I forgot it, you are mistaken; I remember that very unpleasant circumstance perfectly.”

He was evidently annoyed by her candour and tranquillity.

“I regret to find you still resent my conduct, you at least might excuse it.”

Kate smiled.

“I do not resent it now; since that,” she continued, “I have gone through much af-

fliction, I have experienced real grief and sorrow, such as reduce all petty annoyances to their proper level; but why revert to what is past."

"To ask you to—not exactly to forgive, but to acknowledge that my bold attempt to grasp the inexpressible pleasure of your acquaintance was not so heinous."

"Really, Lord Effingham, I should be obliged to you not to continue this conversation any further; I do not suppose it possible for you to comprehend the effect produced on my mind by your audacity; pardon me, but it is the only word that sufficiently expresses my impression of your conduct on the occasion to which you allude. Let it be forgotten, I would not for worlds disturb my cousin with any revelation so likely——"

"Yes," interrupted Lord Effingham, absently, "I perceived, at a glance, that the fair widow was ignorant of the affair, but be it as you choose, for the future, only, if you are to con-

tinue her inmate, take my advice, and withhold the disclosure altogether."

And he smiled with an expression of insolent power, that made Kate's heart thrill with indignation.

" My Lord, I do not require a stranger's advice, what to confide to, or what to withhold from my earliest and dearest friend ; you must excuse me, I have left Lady Desmond alone."

" One moment," cried Lord Effingham, springing to the door, " we meet again as friends ? You must not refuse to give me bulletins of your cousin's health in person."

" I have no wish to embroil the even tenor of my life, about what can concern me no more, I wish you a good morning, my Lord."

He held the door open, and bowed low, as she passed out, then returning to the place where she had stood, remained a moment in silent thought, gnawing his under lip.

" By ——," he at length muttered, " I would hate her if I could ; if she was less

lovely ; her supreme disdain of my admiration was so real, and her indifference ! Yet her cousin is more beautiful, and would have *acted* the part perfectly, but all the time I should have felt it was only the graceful acting of my slave ; this is real, this girl is free as air, and I feel as if afloat in some new and unexplored ocean, where my compasses are at fault, and the stars no longer those I used to steer by."

He looked absently through the window till the animated fiery glance faded into a cold, sneering smile, then slowly descending to the hall door, mounted his horse, and galloped across the park at full speed.

Kate's heart was beating faster when she returned to Lady Desmond's room than when she left it ; there was something of insolence and conscious power in Lord Effingham's manner, that was totally strange and repugnant to her ; this short interview with him had recalled all the sore feeling of resentful indignation

and wounded pride, that had so galled her on their first meeting, and though she felt, rather than reasoned, that it would be most unwise to disclose the *rencontre* to Lady Desmond, she was indescribably provoked to think there was any thing like a secret between her and the proud, bold Earl.

“ Well, dear Kate, how did Lord Effingham take his sentence of banishment ?”

“ He did not take it at all ; he said he would ride over every day, to make enquiries in person.”

“ And did he tell you any news ?”

“ No.”

“ He never tells news ! How unlike the present race of babblings into which our aristocracy has degenerated.”

“ Why, what does he do ?”

“ Ah, Kate, he is no favourite with you ; I see his foreign indifference to unmarried women has prejudiced you.”

“ No, indeed, I neither like nor dislike him,

but there is something in his face, and voice, and manner, I could never trust."

"Lord Effingham does not pretend to be a pattern man, and certainly he is, when he likes it, a most agreeable member of society," returned Lady Desmond, rather coldly. "But will you answer that note of Lady Elizabeth's, I cannot, of course, dine with her."

And Kate perceived, by this sudden change, that her cousin did not like to pursue the subject.

True to his word, Lord Effingham rode over every day to make his enquiries for Lady Desmond, in person, and Kate resolutely secluded herself during the few moments of his stay, in her cousin's or her own chamber.

One morning the invalid was sufficiently well to receive two or three dear (fine lady) friends. Kate stole away from their gossip, to her an unknown tongue, and established herself on a shady seat, commanding a view of the park, her book lay idly in her hand, and

lulled by the hum of the insects, and the gentle rush of the water from one pond to another, she gave herself up to the past.

“How poor dear grandpapa would have delighted in this place ; how Georgy would have cheered him, and now it is too late !”

And the bitterness of sorrow softened for a while in new scenes, and the increased occupation of the last few days, came back all freshly to her mind ; every look, every tone of her beloved parent, was recalled with a distinctness that made her heart ache, and the emptiness and aimlessness of her present life stood out vividly before her.

“Ah, forgive me great Father, if I cannot yet, with perfect submission, say, ‘Thy will be done, help me, strengthen me.’ She involuntarily raised her eyes as she murmured these last words, half aloud ; and they met those of Lord Effingham, which wore a grave and more earnest look than usual, as if Kate’s slight form, with its mourning garb, and her pale

calm face, its expression, spiritualised by the thoughts that occupied her mind, had struck his hard nature with some new sense of truth and beauty.

“Forgive my intrusion,” said he, advancing with his usual easy self-assured air, “they told me Miss Vernon was out, and as you have hitherto allowed me to languish, on such meagre reports of your cousin’s health, as I could gain from Mademoiselle Louise, I ventured to seek a personal interview with you, *al fresco*.

“Lady Desmond will probably see you on Monday, my Lord. Mrs. Cranbourne and her sister were admitted to-day,” returned Kate, with quiet politeness.

“Yes,” said Lord Effingham, absently, “pray Miss Vernon, can you, and will you give me, *le mot de l’enigme*.”

“I do not understand you.”

“What was the cause of Lady Desmond’s

illness, or rather her sudden fancy for the retirement of her own chamber?"

"My cousin, unfortunately, caught cold on Thursday; she sat near an open window, at one of the Ancient Concerts, and ——."

"My dear Miss Vernon, that is the official report, but I want to know why she chooses to submit to the martyrdom, which confinement and inaction is to her, rather than receive me?"

"You imagine then, that her illness is pretended to avoid you? if your curiosity lasts over to-morrow, I will ask her, and give you her solution of the enigma."

Lord Effingham laughed scornfully.

"I do not jest," continued Kate, simply. "I shall repeat to her, both what you have said, and any thing you may add, in the same tone."

"Then you are great friends," said Lord Effingham, seating himself on the bench beside

her, "you are angry that I should doubt the illness of one of the fairest daughters of Erin, whose cheek was ever tinged by the roses of health; but, seriously, you will not make mischief between us? I would never forgive you; do you not see I am very fond of Lady Desmond?"

He leant forward as he spoke these words, with much earnestness, to see what effect they produced on Kate, and at the same time two officers in undress cavalry uniform lounged past; both glanced quickly at Miss Vernon and her companion, but withdrew their eyes immediately, as if conscious of having intruded on an interesting *tete-à-tete*.

Kate's heart almost stood still with a spasm of memory, as she recognised Colonel Dashwood; she could not refrain from exclaiming his name aloud, he turned immediately, and bowing, with a profound and grave respect, which showed Kate he had heard of the loss she had sustained, took her hand and made

some general enquiries, with an air of kindly interest.

“I am staying with Lady Desmond,” she said, her eyes filling with tears, “and you ——.”

“Oh, some of us are quartered here, the rest scattered in small detachments ; I like the place, and am here as much as possible, if you will allow me, I shall do myself the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow.”

“I shall be very happy to see you,” she replied ; and with another low bow, Colonel Dashwood joined his companion and walked away.

“So,” exclaimed Lord Effingham, “you cultivate dragoons, do you, Miss Vernon ? Well, has not the promise of that very “rear rank take open order,” looking individual to call upon you, softened your intention of making mischief between me and *La Vedova ammalata* ?”

“Lord Effingham,” said Miss Vernon,

quietly, rising from her seat, “ I do not know why you choose to adopt a sneering tone towards people in general, but this I do know, that to me, such confidences, as are implied by questions, about Lady Desmond, are peculiarly distasteful ; I have no wish to say anything in the least uncivil, but I should prefer remaining on terms of the most distant acquaintance with you.” She bowed slightly, and walked away, but he followed her in an instant, looking dark and haughty.

“ I thank you for so clear an exposition of your sentiments ; perhaps it was scarcely required ; but you have not yet answered my question ; will you repeat my observations to Lady Desmond ?”

“ I shall—may I beg you to leave me.”

“ Ha,” said Lord Effingham, “ you have not your canine ally to compel me doing so.”

At this moment, all Kate’s pride and decision melted before the memories thus called up ;

and, with a sudden gesture, indicative of her incapability to endure his presence another moment, she pressed her hands to her eyes, in the vain effort to stem the torrent of grief, that swelled her heart.

Lord Effingham retired at this silent, but unmistakeable expression of her feelings, with a look of half startled, half sullen, yet not wholly uncompassionate; and Kate, stealing quickly through the open window, of the morning-room, reached her own unnoticed.

Lady Desmond was in remarkably good spirits at dinner, and Kate was struck by the air of joyous exultation, that seemed as it were to illuminate her grand style of beauty.

“I am right glad to be well again, cousin mine,” she exclaimed. “Glad to be in the world, though, alas! all the mental revolution I intended to make is unaccomplished.”

“I do not know what it was, dearest,” returned Miss Vernon, “so I cannot tell whe-

ther I ought to mourn over another block being added to that pavement of which we have heard so often."

" Well, perhaps it was needless, but now we are free from the servants, tell me all that news over again."

" Lord Effingham," began Kate.

" Nay, dear girl, your own friends first."

" Well then, Colonel Dashwood said he would call here to-morrow."

" I shall be very glad to know him. I had left Dungar long before he was there ; and I have a grudge against him, Kate, for I fancy it was the remembrance connected with his appearance, that caused those tears, of which I can still detect the traces on your face."

" No, Georgy, no, indeed" replied Miss Vernon, earnestly. " Now," she continued, " let me return to Lord Effingham, he heard, it seemed, that I was in the Palace-gardens, and came after me, to ask me what was the

real cause of your indisposition, and to laugh at my *story* of “a cold!””

“Indeed!” said Lady Desmond, with a slight start. “What other reason could he imagine?”

“I do not know, but—” she paused.

“Pray go on,” said Lady Desmond, impatiently, “I hate to have things cut short.”

“Really,” returned Miss Vernon, “I only hesitate, because it seemed so impertinent, what I am about to tell you.

“Never mind—go on—dispense with preface.”

“Lord Effingham said, or rather by what he said, seemed to think, it was to avoid him, you feigned illness!”

“He does,” exclaimed Lady Desmond, with interest; then an instant after, with haughty indifference, she continued—“He gives me credit for more ingenuity, than I possess! yet—” and she leant back, resting one cheek

on her hand, the expression of disdain, she had called up, fading into a look of pensive thought, almost sad. “ How strange he is —how impenetrable ; but these things are so much altered by repetition.”

Lady Desmond thought long and gravely, at length her brow cleared—a smile parted her lips—

“ Perhaps I have disentangled this mystery,” she said ; “ time will tell,” at all events, *bella mia*, I know the world—“ Lord Effingham’s world—better than you do. I shall not notice ‘ the impertinence,’ as you deem it.”

“ Indeed you do know best, Georgy dear, at least, in general, for you have experience, which I have not ; but as to Lord Effingham, I have an instinct, worth whole a life-time of experience, that he is false and selfish—he admires you, indeed he said he was fond of you ; but, oh, do not regard him with anything except the—”

“ Ah, Lord Effingham appears to have been

making quite a confidante of you, Kate ! a rare compliment let me tell you," interrupted Lady Desmond, laughingly, "of course he begged of you not to repeat his confidence ?"

"Yes, and I told I would."

"Well, dearest, it is a strange intimacy that has sprung up between you, and this very Giaour-like peer," returned Lady Desmond, in her sweetest manner, and quite regardless of Kate's warning. "I know not where it—"

"Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell," announced the footman ; and the privy council was ended.

Colonel Dashwood made his appearance, at the proper hour for visiting, the next morning, and very much rejoiced was Kate to welcome him ; he reminded her of much that was sad, 'tis true, but of sadness untinged by any bitter ; and then, she had, since the day before, been haunted by the image of Fred Egerton, as he lay, pale and helpless, on a blue chintz sofa, in Mr. Winter's drawing-room, which was the

latest, and clearest memory connected with Colonel Dashwood.

The conversation was, at first, rather constrained, the mind of both the visitor and visited being full of thoughts they feared to broach—Kate dreaded, yet longed to speak of her grandfather—she feared a rush of tears, that might embarrass her kind and pleasant acquaintance, but her candid, real nature, soon helped her out of the difficulty. Dashwood spoke in terms of cordial and judicious praise of the kind old man ; Kate listened with delight, and told him of her happiness with her cousin, to whom she longed to present him, and felt more intimate with the gay, high-bred dragoon, than she had ever felt before.

“ You remember Egerton, at A——, Miss Vernon ?”

“ Oh, yes, I wished to ask you about him.”

“ He has just been Gazetted Lieutenant Colonel of the —th Lancers, you have heard,

of course, he distinguished himself greatly, at  
\_\_\_\_\_."

"Yes, he wrote to dear grandpapa ; we got the letter scarcely a week before—" she turned aside to hide the tears that would roll down her cheek, in spite of all her efforts to restrain them. "If you should write to Captain — Colonel Egerton, I mean, pray tell him, stern was the summons that prevented a reply to his kind letter, he will be sorry to hear of my irreparable loss."

"Colonel Vernon had not a warmer admirer in the world, than Fred Egerton," cried Dashwood. "Indeed Fred was just the sort of fellow to appreciate him. Well, good morning, Miss Vernon, I am most happy to have seen you, and hope you will allow me to call occasionally, while I am here."

The Monday specified by Lady Desmond, as the day on which she would receive Lord Effingham, was anticipated by Kate with some

anxiety, and no small degree of curiosity. She wished to see on what terms her cousin and her admirer would meet, if any quarrel had been at the bottom of Lady Desmond's indisposition ; and if the Earl was really apprehensive of one arising out of her report of his conversation in the Palace-garden.

Lady Desmond had certainly, not resented her information, for never had Kate seen her so gentle, so loving, and so considerate. They took long drives together, in the balmy summer evenings, sometimes enjoying the exquisite, dewy, perfumed air, and rich cultivated scenery in sympathetic silence, sometimes recalling past summer evenings, to each other, and talking at intervals of the past.

At this time a letter reached her from Winter. He had been a much better correspondent since the poor Colonel's death, and his letters were a source of inexpressible comfort to Kate ; they cheered, while they sympathized in her deep sorrow—she wrote to him in the fullest

confidence, and detailed all matters of personal interest, with a minuteness that showed how welcome was the task of correspondence to her.

The present despatch, after some slight sketch of his plans, which included an excursion of some months into Spain, and a few rapturous exclamations at the scenery, continued thus—"You say, 'now I have room enough in my heart to think of it, I begin to feel, in spite of Georgy's excessive kindness and generosity, a strangely, painful sensation, at times, that not even the clothes I wear, are, properly speaking, my own—shelter, food, all are hers; and though she never, I am certain, gives this a thought, I feel that it mars the equality, which is the soul of friendship—I feel strongly, though indistinctly that this must not, and cannot last; but I am, as yet, incapable of forming any future plan.'

"All this is very natural, and exactly what I advised you and our dear departed friend

against, when your cousin invited you to join her at Florence, last year. Dependency is a thing repugnant to human nature ; but for the present it is right for you to stay where you are ; so be patient, it will be time enough to talk of plans when we return, which will be soon, certainly before Christmas. I want to have you quietly to ourselves, away from finery and fashion, then we will settle everything. Meantime, as I consider you my adopted daughter, if you will allow me, you must just put the enclosed cheque in your dressing-box, as a sort of reserve, in case of foul weather—this is a mere sop to my fidgetty conscience, as I am too selfish to return home at once, to take care of you, which I believe it is my duty to do, and I shall have but small comfort if you refuse ; pooh ! my dear, it is only to oblige your old *maestro* !

“ I see our former acquaintance, Fred Eger-ton has been performing prodigies of valour against those wretched Sikhs—what deplorable

insanity war is ! I have no patience with such courage. Well, good night, I wish you could have a peep at the moon-lit mountain range, opposite my window. Ah ! dear child, you have known much sorrow, but who can look on the exquisite loveliness, which earth, though cursed for our sins, still possesses, and doubt that boundless beneficence and wisdom alike framed our dwelling place, and directs the current of our lives, God bless you, Kate ; my wife greets you, write soon.

“ Your true friend,

“ J. WINTER.”

It may be derogatory to a heroine's character ; but the truth must be confessed, that the consciousness of having fifty pounds in her dressing-box, was a great source of repose and security to ours ; her own slender means were nearly exhausted, and the alternative of being literally penniless, though surrounded with

every luxury, or mentioning the exhausted state of her purse to her open handed cousin, were most insupportable to her—then she could not bear that nurse should feel a want of any kind, and she not able to supply it. It was therefore with no small thankfulness, she penned a reply to her kind friend. Mr. Winter was one of those calm, rational, unselfish people, a compound seldom to be met with, from whom a favour may be safely taken.

“See what Mr. Winter has sent me ; a sort of birthday present before hand,” said Kate, holding up the cheque to nurse.

“ Ah, how much, alanah ?”

“ Fifty pounds, nurse.”

“ Och, good christhians ! think iv that now, athen, is’nt Misther Winther mighty like that little scrap iv paper himself, a thrifle to look at —but worth a power !”

“ Worth so much, that I for one, can never look upon the outward and visible sign of

so much goodness, without respect and affection.”

“ Thru for ye, Miss Kate, an’ so lock it up jewil, there’s no sayin’ the minnit ye may want it, I’ve sometimes a ton weight here, so I have, that’s mighty quare, an’ us in the haighth of grandeur, may be; but where’s the use iv makin’ ye down-hearted, darlint, wid me dhreams be day or night.”

“ No, dear nurse,” sighed Kate, “ I do not wish to hear them.”

Monday morning dawned bright, but before noon, dark clouds rolled up from the horizon, Lady Desmond was looking royally beautiful, as she reclined in her bergère, her luxuriant, glossy black hair, braided under a small cap of exquisite lace; she was paler than usual, but there was a delicacy in her complexion, that contrasted favourably with her large, dark eyes, which looked up, at intervals, through their long, black lashes, with languid calm-

ness, reminding Kate of the unnatural lull that precedes a thunder storm.

Kate was utterly dissimilar to the fair widow ; her golden brown hair, had a light in its waves—her high, calm brow, beneath which her soft eyes beamed with a glance, so earnest, and so pure—her girlish figure so graceful, and pliant, in its drapery of black—the air of deep repose, of unconscious harmony that pervaded every attitude and tone, all framed a totally different picture from the queen-like woman, who, sometimes arranging a few flowers she held in her hand, sometimes dropping them in her lap, heard, without attending to it, her cousin's voice, as she read aloud.

The day was sultry ; heavy, brassy-looking clouds obscured the sun, and the birds chirped in that low, sleepy tone, which always indicates a lowering sky, or a coming storm ; and now and then a sudden warm breeze swept back the muslin curtains, and filled the atmosphere of the room with the rich perfume of the garden.

“How oppressive! I can hardly breathe,” said Kate, laying down the book which she found could not engage her cousin’s attention, and walking towards the window.

“Yes,” said Lady Desmond, languidly, “draw up the blinds, Kate, to the top; let us have all the light and air we can.”

“If Lord Effingham is not here very soon he will get a wetting; I am sure we are on the edge of a thunder storm,” observed Miss Vernon, after a pause.

“Then you fancy he will come.”

“I do not think about it; but I find I anticipate his arrival as something quite certain; I confess I feel anxious to see how he will meet you, for he knows I repeated his—”

“I will tell you,” interrupted Lady Desmond, with a tinge of bitterness in her tone, “as if it could not be the slightest consequence to him, what my opinion, or that of any one upon earth may be.”

“What a character! but this must be acting!”

“No, I believe his manner to be a true index of his mind ; I have now known Lord Effingham for nearly two years ; and I pronounce him incomprehensible, impenetrable ; and yet,” continued Lady Desmond, passionately, “as mystery has always proved the strongest attraction to man’s mind, so I feel irresistibly impelled to gaze into an abyss, I cannot fathom, where everything seems uncertain and obscure ; I am undecided whether he is the coldest of egotists, or a man of the strongest, deepest, most passionate feeling. Do you believe in mesmerism, Kate ? I begin to do so ; how otherwise can I account for the influence that unaccountable man exercises over me ; I do not know whether I love or hate him. I must speak out to you, my own, dear one ; let me tell you all that I have suffered !”

“Dearest Georgy, though I hear you with pain, yes, a thousand times ; but not now ; every moment may bring the earl here, and he must not see you thus agitated ; do not let him

see any emotion ; you must not let him think he has so much power ; I dread his influence over you. *He is not good.* I always think of Milton's Satan, when I hear him speak."

" And what a grand creature Milton's Satan is," cried Lady Desmond ; " but, Kate, let me speak now."

" Hush, hush," said Miss Vernon, again, and more eagerly stopping her. " I hear some one coming ; and the door into the next room is open."

Lady Desmond looked towards it, her dark eyes flashing eagerly ; but her countenance rapidly assuming its usual expression of proud reserve ; it was thrown open to its fullest extent, and the footman announced—" Colonel Dashwood ;" and Kate, as she went forward to receive him, could not restrain a smile at the unexpected finale to their anticipations.

Lady Desmond received the gallant Colonel with more than her usual suavity and grace ; and he, notwithstanding his good nature,

seemed more at ease than when alone with Kate, whose pale cheeks and tearful eyes forbade the gay badinage, which, truth to tell, formed Colonel Dashwood's principal stock in conversational trade, when Melton Mowbray and the moors, were not congenial topics.

Lady Desmond, after the first moment of disappointment, felt the Colonel's visit to be a relief from her own stormy thoughts; and she entered fully into his light and lively conversation; while Kate, though silent, felt soothed and pleased, to have an old acquaintance thus restored to her, a sort of link with by-gone days, ever present to her. She sat near the window copying some manuscript music, for her cousin, to which she had taken a fancy, but oftener resting her head on her hand, half listening, half thinking.

They were laughing at Colonel Dashwood's description of some adventure of his in Dublin; and he was looking very much at home, when Lord Effingham entered, unannounced; and,

at the same moment, a vivid flash of lightning illuminated the apartment, which was gloomy as night.

“I found your doors most hospitably open, Lady Desmond,” said the Earl, advancing with his cool self-possession, “and meeting no one to oppose my progress, entered, with a flash of lightning, like the devil in *Der Freyschutz*.”

“I am glad you escaped the shower which is sure to follow,” returned Lady Desmond, endeavouring to recover the double agitation, occasioned by the lightning and Lord Effingham’s *entrée*.

“And now,” he resumed, quite regardless of the thunder, which almost drowned his voice, and holding her hand, perhaps a moment longer than was strictly *selon les regles*, “now that you have, at last, permitted me to enter your presence, I must say, I see but little sign of the indisposition that banished your friends. Miss Vernon has been in league with you against us—I told her as much the

other day—and she bristled up most indignantly; you must tell her I was right, and you were only fanciful, or—”

“ You hear Lord Effingham, Kate ?” said Lady Desmond, gently.

He turned and bowed to her, as if he now observed her for the first time, since his entrance; but his keen eye had noted each individual in the room, from the moment he crossed its threshold.

Kate returned his salutation ; and as she observed the transformation of Lady Desmond, from an unembarrassed talker, to a silent listener, absorbed in self-watchfulness and intense attention to every syllable that dropped from Lord Effingham’s lips, she longed for Sabrina’s power to free her from his unholy influence.

“ Lord Effingham, Colonel Dashwood,” said Lady Desmond.

The gentlemen bowed, and subsided into their respective seats.

“I feel completely exhausted by the heat,” said Lord Effingham, sinking back in his chair, “the heat and the cold of England are equally unendurable. We have enjoyed a thunder-storm in the Appenines, Lady Desmond ; and you did not start then, as you did just now, when I entered ; it is this heavy atmosphere.”

“Yes ; yet the storm you mention was awfully grand—and at night, too.”

“‘Oh, night,  
And storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,  
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light  
Of a dark eye, in woman !’”

said Lord Effingham, as if to himself ; but, with a glance at Lady Desmond, while Colonel Dashwood was playing with Kate’s pen-wiper, and talking of the band of the —th.

Lady Desmond sighed, and looked away towards Lord Effingham following the direction of her eyes, with his, smiled.

“Miss Kate, agrah,” said Mrs. O’Toole’s voice, from the verandah, at that moment, “don’t be sitting wid the winda wide open, an’ the lightnin’ strikin’ right an’ lift—sure it’ll be powerin’ cats and dogs in a minit;” and nurse’s good-humoured face, though not quite so bright as in former days, beamed in on them. “The Lord save us! I beg yer pardon, me lady; sure I thought Miss Kate was all alone be herself, an’ I niver thought to find—”

“No apology, nurse,” said Lady Desmond, good-humouredly.

“Mrs. O’Toole,” cried Colonel Dashwood, “I hope I am not quite forgotten;” and he stepped forward to greet her.

“Faith, ye’r not, sir; sure, a dog that I remimbered at Dungar, would be light to me eyes, let alone a grand lookin’ gentleman like yer honor!”

“It is raining heavily already, nurse,” said Lady Desmond, with whom Mrs. O’Toole was

a great favourite ; “ come in, at once, and you can speak to Colonel Dashwood.”

“ Och, Kurnel, what’s the Captin doin’ ? an’ where is he ?”

“ Which Captain ?” he returned ; “ I know so many.”

“ Och, mee own Captin—him that I nursed through the faver !”

“ Oh, Captain Egerton ; he is in India, and is a Colonel now ; he has been doing wonders. I will tell him you were asking for him ; he will be delighted.”

“ Me blessin’ on him, wherever he goes. Och, it’s a weary sore world ;” and she glanced at Kate, and wiped a tear from her eyes with the corner of her apron ; then curtseying profoundly, retired, saying—“ I’ll niver forget the Captin, an’ him that’s gone. How happy they wer togather !”

“ Pray,” said Lord Effingham, as she passed, “ is your memory always equally good for every one and everything ?”

“I always had a wondherful memory, mee lord,” said Mrs. O’Toole, with another low curtsey; “for it can remimber an’ disremimber, mee lord! just what’s convanient be-times!”

“Very convenient,” replied his lordship, with a laugh; “good morning.”

The storm of rain and thunder growing every moment fiercer and more loud, Lady Desmond ordered the windows to be fastened; and the party drew naturally closer together, while the vivid flashes of lightning, at intervals, displayed their countenances to each other; and Kate, her nerves not yet braced back to their former strength, almost blushed for her own cowardice, as she, sometimes, covered her face with her hands, and scarce could refrain from seizing the arm nearest her; but that arm was Lord Effingham’s. At last, one fearful crash, and blinding blaze of light, the climax of the storm, startled her out of

every consideration, save the momentary terror ; covering her eyes with one hand, she stretched out the other blindly, catching Lord Effingham's arm in the involuntary grasp of alarm and leaning towards him ; it was but for a moment, and she drew back.

“ By Jove, a thunder-bolt must have fallen,” cried Colonel Dashwood, springing to the window, as if to look for it.

Lady Desmond followed him.

“ It was of no use,” said Lord Effingham, rapidly, in a low voice, to Kate ; “ you see my position is not the least shaken ! why interfere between your cousin and myself ?”

“ Would it give you pain if I succeeded ?” she asked, in the same tone.

“ Yes.”

“ Do you answer me in all sincerity ?”

“ In all sincerity, I do.”

“ Then I am satisfied.”

“ Then we are friends—at least, not foes.”

Kate bent her head, and said, frankly—

“I wish to *know* you.”

Lord Effingham could only reply by a look of surprise, when Colonel Dashwood approached to take his leave. The Earl bowed formally to him.

“I suppose I must not ask you to stay for dinner,” said Lady Desmond. “It would not be *comme il faut* for recluses such as Kate and myself to have so gay a guest as Lord Effingham !”

“That is as you think,” he returned ; “I would, however, certainly stay, even on that faint shadow of an invitation, were I not unfortunately engaged to dine with a grand-aunt of mine, just arrived at the Palace. By the way, would you like to know her ? she has two daughters. Miss Vernon might find them acceptable ; young ladies are, you know, gregarious.”

“We shall be most happy to make your

aunt's acquaintance," returned Lady Desmond.

The Earl bowed, and departed.

"I am weary, Kate—my head aches—I cannot speak to you to-day—some other time—I will go and lie down."

"As you like, dear Georgy."

## CHAPTER IV.

## REVELATIONS.

Not many days elapsed before the cards of the Honourable Mrs. J. E. Meredyth, and the Misses Meredyth were laid on Lady Desmond's table ; but it was some time before Kate saw them ; for, feeling totally unequal to the society of strangers, she declined accompanying her cousin to return their visit, or to an evening party, which quickly followed the first interchange of formalities.

She regretted, while she was too just to blame, her cousin's rapid oblivion of the sad scene so deeply engraven on her own memory,

though she steadily endeavoured to cultivate a cheerful resignation, and sometimes was grateful for any interruption that drew her from the oppressive sadness and sense of loneliness, that often weighed on her spirits. Grief is something so repugnant to the young, that they involuntarily endeavour to throw it off. The morning sun gilds all things with its life-giving, beautifying light, it is only the lengthening shadows of evening to which tender sadness and lingering regret seem natural.

And Kate's true-hearted efforts to submit unmurmuringly to her bitter loss, were seconded by her happy age; and again peace, like a dove, still fluttering its wings before settling in its nest, was slowly and surely returning to her.

Lord Effingham's visits were not quite so frequent as before Lady Desmond's illness; but they were more agreeable to Kate; his manner was more real; he noticed her more—with the air of an elder relative, 'tis true—yet

with a quiet, unremitting attention, obvious enough to herself, though scarcely noticeable, save to a very keen observer.

The terms on which he had placed himself with Lady Desmond rather puzzled her; he devoted much of his time to her, was evidently an admirer of her beauty and agreeability; yet Kate could not help thinking there was more of the old friend, of the *habitué* of the house, than the lover, in his tone and manner. Lady Desmond seemed, on the whole, happy enough, and met the warm advances of Mrs. Meredyth very cordially.

“How do you like your new acquaintance?” asked Kate, the morning after Mrs. Meredyth’s *soirée*.

“Oh, well enough; they are abundantly civil; but not at all the sort of people you would fancy Lord Effingham’s relatives to be. Madame Mere is fat and fair, and wonderfully preserved; she looks like his aunt, not grand-aunt; she is grave and quiet; the daughters

are *very* young ladies, of about thirty, I should think ; they are scarcely good style ; and I thought they would positively devour Colonel Dashwood and a Mr. Burton, and some other dragoons, who embellished the entertainment."

" Burton !" repeated Kate ; " I remember—"

" And so does he," interrupted Lady Desmond ; " Colonel Dashwood introduced him to me, and asked permission to bring him here to-day ; he enquired for you very particularly, and said he had heard a great deal of you from a Captain or Colonel Egerton, a great ally of yours, I suspect."

Kate sighed.

" Was Lord Effingham there ?"

" Yes, rather to my astonishment ; he seemed horridly bored, I could see that ; for the species of worship offered to him, both by aunt and cousins, is exactly the sort of thing to disgust him."

" If the Miss Meredyths are constantly en-

gaged in devouring dragoons, and worshipping Lord Effingham, they must be busy indeed," said Kate.

"From what I could gather, Lord Effingham's presence was rather an unusual favour; however, we are to be great friends; I must have them to dine here some day, or to a strawberry and cream supper, or something of that sort; only I am afraid you do not feel up to it, dear Kate; but if you do not mind—"

"Oh, pray do not think of me, Georgy, I am always glad to see you amused; I can steal away if I find myself unequal to be agreeable—or—"

"No, no," interrupted Lady Desmond, in her turn. "Dear love, you shall not be teased, only I think it would do you good."

And Kate saw the point was decided against her.

"I wish very much, Georgy, you would allow me to invite Mrs. Storey to spend a day here; I ought to go and see her; but I feel I

cannot go there yet ; if you have no engagement next week."

" Oh, ask her, by all means ; she was very civil, I remember ; stay, I will write the note ; you can enclose it ; and, while we are about it, let us ask the husband ; he is something terrific, is he not ?"

" Yes, indeed, he is."

" Do not look so grave about it," said Lady Desmond, laughing ; " let us go to the drawing-room—my desk is there."

As Kate usually chose those hours, when the gardens were free from the band and mob to wander there, she did not meet Lady Desmond's new friends until the evening of her *soirée*, which was a very agreeable little impromptu meeting—the guests verbally invited in the morning of the same day, when the band had assembled the few inhabitants of Hampton Court in one focus. Yet Kate shrank from this unwonted gaiety as from a desecration.

Nurse strove to cheer her up.

“Sure, it’ll do ye good, jewil, an’ plaise mee lady, so come now, smile, for yer poor ould nurse.”

The Meredyths arrived rather late ; and Miss Vernon was obliged to remain near Lady Desmond until introduced to them, before she retreated to the small drawing-room, away from the noise and excitement of the bagatelle board, round which Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell and some young ladies, who came under her chaperonage, were gathered, all eagerly exercising their skill against divers and sundry dragoons, contributed by Colonel Dashwood, at Lady Desmond’s request, to assist her in entertaining her guests.

Mrs. and the Miss Meredyths were rather over dressed for so small a party. Their noisy entry, and loud laughter, repelled Kate, though she endeavoured to second her cousin’s evident wish that she should know them better ; so suppressing her inclination to retreat, she lis-

tened patiently to the reiterated assurances of their desire to make her acquaintance.

But Kate's calm, gentle manner, and polite replies, proved faint counter-attractions, to the invitations from the bagatelle party ; and the high-spirited Miss Meredyths, were soon immersed in all the interest of that scientific game.

Kate, at Lady Desmond's request, led Mrs. Meredyth into the inner drawing-room, to show her some beautiful water-color drawings, of scenes in the Appenines, which Lady Desmond had purchased at Florence.

They had the room to themselves, and Kate soon perceived that it a was very interesting work to her companion, who never failed to ask some well put, leading query during the replacing of each drawing, as to the duration of her nephew's acquaintance with Lady Desmond, or her connections, estates, &c., at which Kate, unworldly as she was, could not avoid smiling.

It was with evident relief that she heard Lady Desmond enter, saying—

“If you will accept me as a partner, *faute de mieux*, my dear Mrs. Meredyth, Lady Elizabeth will manage to have her rubber; I expected Dr. ——, the veteran physician before alluded to; but if you will bear with my errors till he comes—”

“You are very good, Lady Desmond; only it is too bad to ask you to play whist at your age.”

And Mrs. Meredyth rose gladly. Kate stayed to look over some of the drawings that remained, and to replace them in their portfolio, wishing she could escape from a collection of strangers, all of whom were uninteresting to her.

Burton had not yet made his appearance, and she hoped to have some conversation with him; for the morning he had called, she was out. So she stood gazing at a drawing, resting her arm on the top of a *prie dieu* chair, and

thinking of Fred Egerton, when Lord Effingham said, gently, and close to her—

“I thought I should find you here.”

She started slightly, but turned to him with a smile, for, seeing how much her cousin's feelings were interested in his behalf, she was, as she had told him, anxious to know him better; and, her mind fully occupied with the impression of his admiration of Lady Desmond, the possibility of his ever bestowing a thought upon herself, save as a friend and relative of hers, never crossed it. She was, therefore, rather glad to have a little *tete-à-tete causerie* with him.

“I have been showing these drawings to Mrs. Meredyth, but she has gone to play whist with Georgy, who detests cards. We must endeavour to rescue her.”

“Not yet, if you please, Miss Vernon,” returned Lord Effingham, looking fixedly at her, “I so seldom have an opportunity of saying a

word to you, uninterrupted by some one or other, that you must forgive me if I rush abruptly into the apology I have been so anxious to make for the last fortnight. The day in the Palace Garden," he continued, rapidly—"when you scornfully informed me that you disdained any friendship with so forward and ill-bred a fellow as myself—I reminded you of that dog. It was in total ignorance of ——. But I see I am only paining you. Lady Desmond told me, and I have been burning to assure you of my deep regret. I trust you will believe my assurance that no irritation would ever have tempted me, knowingly, to revive any memory distressing to you."

He uttered these with an earnest softness that surprised Miss Vernon, so complete was the transformation it created in his look and manner.

"I never accused you, even in thought, of such cruelty," she returned, anxious to relieve

his evident anxiety, “so say no more about it, I entreat.”

“But the gesture of repugnance, with which you turned from me, I cannot forget it.”

“Did I,” said Kate, blushing at the idea of having wounded the feelings of any one; “I was unaware, but, if you reflect for a moment, you will acknowledge it was natural, just then, you know I felt sick at heart.”

Lord Effingham’s dark cheek flushed for an instant, he bit his lips.

“Yet you say you forgive me.”

“And I do,” she returned, “I could not resent an unintentional offence.”

He smiled, a very different smile from those that usually darkened rather than illuminated his countenance, and Kate, thought, “perhaps that might have been the expression of it in childhood.”

He held out his thin, nervous, resolute looking hand, with a look of entreaty and an expressive—

“Then if ——.”

Kate, who had not an atom of prudery, and was anxious to make up for the gesture of repugnance, he had so forcibly described, put her own frankly into it; he raised it for a moment, to his lips, and said, lightly, half in jest, half earnest—

“And on this hand I renounce my evil ways.”

She withdrew her hand quickly, but before she could make any reply, Lord Effingham said—

“Let us look at these exquisite views; Lady Desmond, the Wentworths, and myself, made many expeditions among the Appenines. Where were you then, Miss Vernon?”

He asked this in a tone as if he remembered, with amazement, having enjoyed any thing where she was not; but Kate did not notice it, for, transported back to former scenes, by his question, she answered, with a sigh—

“Ah, I was then very happy!”

Lord Effingham looked up at her, and as her eyes were bent down, quite regardless of him, he permitted a slight smile to mingle in the admiring glance that rested on her.

“Have you seen Lady Desmond?” she enquired, raising her eyes to his with a vague sort of notion that she ought not to remain there in that quiet room, with its books and pictures, *tête-à-tête*, with her cousin’s lover.

“No, I came here to ask you where she was, *remember!*”

“Why, am I to remember? do you wish me to tell her?”

“As you like,” said Lord Effingham, carelessly, and turning to the drawings, began to speak of their merits, and of the artist who took the views, in a clear, simple, forcible manner which interested Miss Vernon greatly. She had always felt that her companion was possessed of talent, though his indolence seldom permitted him to display it in conversation; and she now listened with pleasure to his un-

wonted agreeability. Lady Desmond was frequently the subject of his comments, which were always flattering, but expressed with an air of calm, deliberate approbation, equally unlike his usually sneering indifference, or a lover's warmth ; yet his memory appeared to be wonderfully distinct as to her doings ; in one place, she had ordered her picture from a distressed artist, and retrieved his fortunes by her liberal payment and patronage.

“It was in Italy, you know, where the necessaries of life are not worth double their weight in gold,” added Lord Effingham. Or it was her courage and self-possession in a thunder-storm, or her taste in an *al-fresco* entertainment ; but though thus constantly referred to, there was an occasional glimpse shown of her pride, her imperiousness, or her impatience, never condemned, but hinted at more by a tone, a glance, a smile than by words.

Kate listened intently, fancying she had got

the clue to his strange indecision as regarded her cousin, and gradually determining that he only hesitated to declare the love, she was sure he felt, because he feared that the existence of such qualities were not calculated to make a home happy.

“He does not know her noble nature or her value, and she always appears to greater disadvantage with him than with any one else. Perhaps I may be able to clear this up,” she thought. “And, after all, he may be a better man than I imagined,” so she listened, resting her clasped hands on the top of the chair by which she stood, her head inclined gently to one side, a slight pleased smile curving her lip, and showing the pearly teeth, while he, compelling himself to speak of the drawing he held, instead of indulging his natural indolence in silent contemplation of the sweet face before him, his back to the door, was first conscious that their solitude was broken in upon by her change of countenance and position. He

turned just as Colonel Dashwood, entering said—

“I have been looking for you, Miss Vernon, to present Mr. Burton,” waving his hand to that gentleman who accompanied him, inwardly consigning his Colonel to the inferno of busy bodies, for having so pertinaciously sought Miss Vernon, and interrupted a second interesting *tete-à-tete*.

Miss Vernon’s cordial and unembarrassed manner set him at ease, however, and Lord Effingham, in an unusually amiable mood, exerted himself to cultivate Dashwood, so the *partie quarré* progressed into a sociable exchange of trivialities, when their number was increased by the approach of Lady Desmond, who entered with a look of restlessness, Kate knew well how to interpret.

“Some one said you had arrived, Lord Effingham,” she said.

“I could not see you in the next room, and came here to look for you,” he replied,

smiling. “But the awful intelligence that you were playing whist with my aunt rendered me incapable of further exertion. Is that sacrifice accomplished ?”

“Yes, I have done my duty.”

“And I have been living over some very pleasant days again,” he returned, glancing at the drawings, “and prosing to Miss Vernon on the same subject; but I must pay my respects to Mrs. Meredyth,” and he offered his arm to Lady Desmond.

Miss Vernon continued to converse a little longer with Colonel Dashwood and Mr. Burton; but neither mentioned Fred Egerton, till Kate, apprehending she might be asked to contribute towards the music, now superseding the bagatelle, complained of fatigue, and wished them “good night.”

“I am glad I shall be able to tell my friend Fred Egerton I met you, Miss Vernon,” said Burton, “I kept my letter open for the purpose, as he always asks me for some intelligence of

his old friends, though I do not think he seems inclined to return to them."

"Quite right," said Colonel Dashwood, "he has made an excellent start in India; good night, Miss Vernon; I will tell Lady Desmond you have beat a retreat."

"Good night," and soon after the party broke up.

Lord Effingham drove home by moonlight; but his thoughts were too darkly chaotic for us to fathom.

The Miss Meredyths, in council over their "*toilettes de nuit*," decided that whether "Eff" married Lady Desmond or not, it was well worth their while to cultivate her acquaintance, and Burton, throwing off his uniform, and drawing his writing-table to an open window, proceeded to add a P.S., to his letter.

"I have just returned from a tranquil little Arcadian evening party at Lady Desmond's, where I was introduced to your old acquaint-

ance, Miss Vernon, and I am half inclined to forgive you all the nonsense you used to talk about her ; though she looks pale and pensive, I think she is still more lovely than she was at that ball, where we saw her, two years ago. I fancy I can account for the present quietism and irreproachable life of the rather notorious Lord Effingham. He came in for old St. L's beautiful villa near Richmond, some time ago, and is nominally living there ; but, in reality, is here every day, and all day, and the gossips are puzzled ; because if Lady Desmond is the attraction, they could have married any time these two years ; but, from what I have seen, I am certain it is your friend Miss Vernon who will be Countess of Effingham. In short, I am pretty sure they are engaged ; I hope he may make a tolerable husband, for she deserves well I am certain. This is my latest intelligence—so, good night, old fellow, and do not keep me six months waiting for a reply to this.”

Kate was sitting, near the window, in her room, waiting until the household had sunk into silence before she laid down to sleep, when the door was softly opened by Lady Desmond, who entered, saying—

“Are you awake? Oh! you have not gone to bed.”

“Dear Georgy!” exclaimed Miss Vernon, rising to meet her, “I hope you did not think me rude for running away so selfishly, but—”

“Not a word more,” interrupted her cousin, passing her arm caressingly round her, “you were right to do as you felt inclined—indeed I fear I was inconsiderate in asking you to join us, nor was there anything very attractive in our guests.”

There was a pause for some moments; and then, Lady Desmond, drawing Kate closer to the window, asked—

“Are you sleepy, love?”

“No, dear Georgy, not in the least.”

“Then I will resume my revelations. I

have not felt in the mood to do so before, and you were wise and kind not to urge me."

"Go on then, dearest," said Kate, "I long to hear your story."

"When first I met Lord Effingham at Naples," began Lady Desmond, withdrawing her arm from Kate, and resting the other against the window-frame, "I had been rather bored by the perpetual gossip about him always floating in the society there, and, at the same time, I was intensely fatigued by the utter absence of anything like interest in the world at large. I had no particular object—I was so perfectly my own mistress—I had not even the excitement of imagining what I would do if I could, for I had the power of accomplishing every rational wish. I was wearied of the excessive attentions and admiration of a dozen needy adorers, and, in short, *ennuye'd*. In this happy and commendable frame of mind, I dragged myself listlessly to a birthday dinner at the English Ambassador's; and accident

placed me next a gentleman, so quietly *distingué*, that nine out of ten observers, would not have noticed him ; my attention was attracted by his being a stranger in a circle where each was known to each, and I was rather surprised when Lady W—— introduced him to me as Lord Effingham. He handed me down to dinner ; but if I give you all these frivolous particulars, I shall not come to the end of my story until morning. There was an indescribable fascination for me in his manner. You must have observed the sense of power it conveys—the impression that there is something ever to be revealed, which you can never fathom, while he reads all your thoughts ; the constant air of cool indifference you have seen ; but the occasional softness, so exquisite in its flattering suggestions, you have not. Ah, Kate, I little thought as I drove home that night, feeling life had still something left to wish for, something still to excite, that the time would come when I as ardently desired to

have that passage wiped away from my existence.

“ I met Lord Effingham in society frequently, and he was the only man, amongst those of our circle, who did not enter himself as an aspirant for my smiles—to use the wretched *jargon* of those idlers—I will not say this piqued me. Pique is too weak, too French a term, to express the scorn of myself, with which his neglect filled me; he only considered me a fitting object of admiration for the vulgar mob. Yet there was a sympathy between us, that, though we seldom spoke, linked us strangely. Gradually—I cannot tell how it was—we became more intimate, and my very soul was absorbed in the intense longing to make him feel that I was not powerless. At length, I saw I was admired—I read it in his eyes a thousand times, and no longer unoccupied and listless, every faculty at its fullest stretch, both to feel and to conceal what I felt; for I dreaded either the world, or Lord Effing-

ham, obtaining even the slightest clue to the state of my mind ; then, Kate, then, for the first time, I tasted all the wild excitement— all the concentrated vitality of which life is capable."

Lady Desmond's eyes dilated, and Kate felt her own veins thrill with the contagious passion that inspired her cousin's words.

" Still," resumed Lady Desmond, " I was unconscious that, in my efforts to rivet chains on so untamable a captive, I had only twined them closely round myself. This did not last long ; his excessive variability opened my eyes ; though the tenderest accents had breathed the well-adapted line from my favorite poet in tones that rendered its application unmistakeable, though the interruption of our slightest conversation was avoided as unendurable in the evening, the next morning would find him so utterly cold, indifferent, almost forgetful, that I shrunk from the power so remorselessly displayed, and fled.

“Whether the novelty of my seeming indifference—for so far, I acted bravely, Kate—was not yet ‘*flettri*,’ or whether he was sick of Naples, I do not know, but he followed me to Florence, and told me, with the calm gravity of seeming truth, that Naples was insupportable without me. I believed him—nay, I think he spoke what he then felt. I was again lapped in Elysium; he was less variable—I did not care to think of the future, I was no longer strong enough to preserve the guard I had hitherto kept. His haughty iron-spirit mastered mine—he saw it, and left Florence for England.

“I will not dwell on that miserable year—I cannot—for I only remember a dark chaos of black misery and despair—an eternal effort to seem what I was not. All this is incomprehensible to you, Kate—may it ever be so. I despise myself; at this moment I hate Lord Effingham; but yet I would give every hope here, almost every hope hereafter, to see him

at my feet—to hear him say, ‘I love you,’—this wild longing to touch his heart ; the conviction that no effort of mine can do so ; the glimpse of his love ; the long cold night of his indifference ; and, worse than all, the irritating sense of slavery to his will, is death to me. Yet I have striven against it ; I vowed I would not return to England while it contained him, and you know how I kept my vow—aye, in despite of duty. And when I did come, I believed he was in Paris. And must I live through all this again ? Why does he seek me to torture me ? I scarcely gave him the civil encouragement to call on me, required by the usages of society. And yet, I fear, he sees too well how vainly I struggle against his influence.

“ His questions to you, when I endeavored to gain a few days’ quiet reflection, uninterrupted by his disturbing presence, they were strange, yet they showed interest. Oh, Kate, Kate, can you read this riddle for me ? my ex-

perience is all at fault ; what say the instincts of your fresh heart ?”

“ He loves you,” cried Kate, much moved by her cousin’s recital ; and she spoke her true conviction, “ he must love you, and we do not know what motives he may have. Yet, I fear he must be selfish, and cold-hearted, to think so little of your feelings. Oh, dear Georgy, try not to love him ; how can you love where you do not trust ? pray to God to help you, and make up your mind to endure a little present pain, in the hope of future peace ; let us leave this place, and go away from him—he has no right to make you wretched—let us go.”

“ No—impossible,” said Lady Desmond, faintly, as if wearied by her own emotions. “ Never was the spell so strong on me as now. I cannot—nay more, Kate, I *will* not break it ; do not look so sadly, so shocked. I will be reasonable ; you said just now we could not know his motives—fate seems to have thrown us together again—for God knows I came down

here to get out of London, lest he might suddenly re-appear, to make me writhe under the consciousness of my thraldom. Let us see what another month may disclose. I feel that, before long, all doubt will be at an end, though now, at times, I think he loves me."

"Yes, he loves you—he must," cried Kate, gazing on Lady Desmond's beautiful face, as, glowing with the animation her reminiscences had called up, "but he loves himself better."

"Then I am free," returned her cousin, "he is too grand a creature to be selfish—no there is none like him. Whatever his faults may be, they are not petty—he can love. We will remain here another month. What do you advise?"

"Whatever I advise, dear Georgy, you will stay; and perhaps it is better to give Lord Effingham a fair trial, though he might follow us; at all events, you do not quite disapprove my counsel, I would fain have you go."

"Do not ask me, I cannot; but is not that

two o'clock—to bed—to bed, Kate, how could I have kept you up so late. Good night."

"God bless you, and give you peace, dear Georgy—good night."

## CHAPTER V.

## AN ECLAIRCISSEMENT.

THE note of invitation, which Lady Desmond had despatched to Mrs. Storey, was quickly answered in the affirmative ; that worthy woman having a strongly marked preference for fashion and the aristocracy ; though if the truth must be told, it was an act of heroic accordance, with her principles to spend an entire day with Lady Desmond, who had impressed her with a sincere feeling of awe.

“ Mrs. Storey has much pleasure in accepting my polite invitation. *Cela va sans dire* ; write, Kate dear, and say I will send the car-

riage to meet her at Kingston. Mr. Storey is engaged till six o'clock, but will come down for her, *tant mieux.*"

Kate felt her cousin's civility to her friend as the most delicate kindness, and thanked her with an eloquent glance.

Lady Desmond seemed to cling more to Miss Vernon since she had made the confession detailed in the last chapter ; she had seemed more cheerful, and hopeful too, as if relieved by her confidence in another—her manner with Lord Effingham, had more of frankness and courage, and he, ever keen and quick, was evidently aware of some change in the mind, or heart, he knew so well ; and for the moment seemed roused from his habitual indifference to a deeper and more palpable interest. Kate watched all this anxiously. "Is he afraid of losing her," she thought. "Ah, if she would try to *be*, and not merely to *seem*, careless of him, she would bind him to her—there is something so irresistible in the evidence of

truth. But how foolish—how worthless it all is—they are both too prosperous to love in earnest!"

" In climes full of sunshine, though splendid their dyes,  
    But faint are the odours, the flowers shed about,  
'Tis the mist, and the clouds of our own weeping skies,  
    That draw their full spirit of fragrancy out.  
So the wild glow of passion, may kindle from mirth ;  
    But 'tis only in grief, true affection appears—  
To the magic of smiles, it may first owe its birth,  
    But the soul of its sweetness is drawn out by tears."

Kate no longer avoided Lord Effingham, she readily accepted every opportunity of conversing with him, though each day showed her how vain were her attempts to penetrate his real sentiments; all things, however, wore a smiling aspect the morning she drove to Kingston, to meet Mrs. Storey.

" I am sure, Miss Vernon, this is most polite and attentive, and I am truly rejoiced to see you looking so much better, but the hair at

'Ampton Court is the best in world ; and how is Lady Desmond, &c., &c."

Kate was really glad to see the good-natured garrulous little woman, and the sincere, kindly tone of her enquiries for Mr. Storey, and the children touched her guest's heart.

"Indeed, I always tell Mr. S. that you are not one of your forgetful people, that never remember a former friend, when you have got grand, new ones."

"I should indeed be sorry to be so worthless as to forget all your kindness to me and mine," returned Kate, warmly. "I would have gone to see you before this, but I cannot yet bring myself to go to that neighbourhood ; before we leave this part of the world, however I certainly will."

"Oh dear, yes, Miss Vernon, remember I count on a week or fortnight, or as long as your cousin will spare you. I suppose you will never leave her now, until you go to a house of your own ?"

“ That I cannot tell,” returned Kate ; “ at present, at all events, probably until this terrible lawsuit of mine, which is still dragging on, is decided, I shall remain with her.”

“ Well you must come to me for a few days soon, at all events, though I cannot offer you the same grandeur and elegance, you are accustomed to here.”

“ My dear Mrs. Storey, you know what I was accustomed to when you first showed me kindness and attention ; but tell me something of your brother.”

The meridian sun streamed fully on them, for the last part of their drive, and Mrs. Storey, who was an eager talker, and was excited by the meeting with Kate, looked painfully red and heated, by the time the carriage stopped at the old fashioned, iron gates, leading into the garden, before Lady Desmond’s house ; and as they were ushered into the cool, fragrant drawing-room, with its open windows, darkened by Venetian blinds, and

breathing an atmosphere of simple refinement, Kate could hardly refrain from a smile, at the contrast between Lady Desmond's calm courteous manner, and fresh, undisturbed appearance, and the flushed, fussy guest—she rose to receive so graciously.

Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell, and Colonel Dashwood came in, during luncheon, much to Mrs. Storey's edification, though she sat listening, rather silently, to their animated talk of people and things all unknown to her.

“I am sorry,” said Kate, turning to her, “this is not one of the days on which the band performs; it is a very good one, though I have only heard it from a distance.”

“If you like I will order them to play this afternoon,” said Colonel Dashwood. “Say the word, and they shall be ready by the time you have expended your admiration on the Vandykes, &c., which you are going to see.”

“By all means, Colonel Dashwood,” cried Lady Desmond, who dreaded the unoccupied

afternoon, "Mrs. Storey would, I am sure, like it."

"Really," replied that lady, rather confused at the idea of so much power being exerted for her amusement, "Colonel Dashwood, you are very good, if it is not too much trouble."

"Trouble; oh, none whatever," he said, smiling and bowing to Mrs. Storey. "Lady Desmond, perhaps you will send one of your people with Colonel Dashwood's compliments, to Mr. Clark, the band master, and say he wishes the band should play on the terrace-walk, in about an hour and a half."

When they had prepared for their proposed lounge (and Mrs. Storey felt almost ashamed of Lady Desmond's coarse straw bonnet, with its simple black ribbon), they found that Lord Effingham had added himself to their party, and stood talking to Colonel Dashwood in one of the windows. His quick eye rested for a moment on Mrs. Storey's finery, with an expression of calm curiosity, as one might notice

some unusual specimen in the Zoological Gardens.

Lady Desmond immediately presented him to her, with the same easy politeness she would have shown towards a duchess, and he, bowing profoundly, observed—

“ You are going picture gazing ! allow me to join your party, I have not seen the paintings here since my raspberry jam, and peg-top days.”

Lady Desmond, and Mrs. Storey, escorted by Colonel Dashwood, walked first, Lady Elizabeth took Kate’s arm, and Lord Effingham sauntered by her side.

“ This is too much for me,” panted Lady Elizabeth, “ I cannot pass my own door, and, I am only delaying you from your friend ; tell Lady Desmond I broke down on the road—pray ring that bell for me, my lord ; thank you, good-bye.”

“ Pray,” said Lord Effingham, as he and Kate continued to walk, side by side, “ where

did Lady Desmond pick up that curious specimen of the genus woman?"

"She did not pick her up, I did—or rather she picked me up, and showed me kind and respectful attention, when less curious specimens of the human race had the taste and discernment to class me, with the children's maids, and nurses, frequenting Kensington Gardens."

"Fairly hit, and deserved, I confess ; yet I had hoped you were magnanimous enough to have buried that egregious mistake in oblivion."

"So I do in general, and only remember it when your contempt for something I know to be good, though, perhaps unprepossessing in appearance, recalls to my mind the unfairness of judging the Lord Effingham to-day by the uncourteous stranger of last winter."

He bit his lips in silence for a moment, and then, with a smile of unusual frankness, said—

“A retort from Miss Vernon is like a hair trigger in the hands of an angel with shining wings and snowy drapery ; leave such carnal weapons to your imperial cousin ; truth, simple and earnest, is at once your shield and spear ; better say at once what is now in your mind, without circumlocution. ‘You despise a good and a useful woman, who is worth a whole nation of ‘*vaut riens*,’ like yoursclf.’ Eh, Miss Vernon ?”

“That is rather too strong,” said Kate, laughing.

“Nevertheless, I have read your thoughts—I often do—I can read your cousin’s ; what a different book ! Yet she is a splendid creature —how desperately—”

And Kate, listening with all her soul, was almost startled into a scream by a sudden hand laid on her arm, and a breathless voice exclaiming—

“I have just seen Lady Elizabeth, Miss Vernon, and I ran after you to hear what all

this arrangement about the band is. Ah, how do you do, Effingham?"

And the two Miss Meredyths were incorporated in their party.

The rest of the day passed over pleasantly enough ; the pictures, the band, and the gardens kept them free from those "awful pauses" which so often desolate a day spent with country friends ; while Lord Effingham's unwonted exertions to please and amuse Lady Desmond, *pro tem.* hushed every doubt, and enabled her to bear up heroically under the rampant agreeability of poor Mr. Storey at dinner.

"Well, my dear," cried his wife, as she was putting on her bonnet, previous to her departure, "I am sure I have had the most delightful day, and, what is the best of all, is the prospect of such happiness and success before you—a more elegant man I never met, and so taken up with you—"

“What are you talking about?” asked Kate.

“Lord Effingham to be sure; and—”

“How can you imagine such nonsense, dear Mrs. Storey,” cried Kate, “it is too absurd, for—”

But Lady Desmond’s entrance cut short their conversation; a profusion of farewell speeches followed—promises from Kate to visit them—assurances from the visitors of their content—a large bouquet from Lady Desmond—and they were gone.

Time rolled on with a pleasant sameness for the remainder of the month of trial agreed on by the cousins. Kate entered more into the little society which assembled two or three times a week at Lady Desmond’s house, and the fair widow herself began a line of conduct to which, as she felt Kate would be much opposed, she always endeavoured to avoid any allusion when they were alone. Colonel Dash-

wood was unmistakeably "*epris*" with the beautiful widow ; and she, though scarcely encouraging him, certainly showed a preference for his society, intended to pique Lord Effingham. Once only did Kate venture to hint at the imprudence of such a proceeding.

" It can never be successful, for it is untrue ; Lord Effingham does not appear to notice it, and it is a cruel injustice to a kind-hearted, honourable man, who loves you. I am afraid. Dear Georgy, this is miserable work, it will destroy your better nature—let us leave this place. Forgive me for asking, but how can you prefer the uncertain selfishness of the Earl, clever and polished as he is, to that frank, manly, high-bred, Colonel Dashwood ? I wish you would love him instead."

" Kate," cried Lady Desmond, almost angrily, " how can you accuse me of such deceitful conduct ? Colonel Dashwood is a " How terrible to be thus dependent for

man of the world and can take care of himself. I beg you will not misunderstand me so much again. I shall leave this in a few weeks—till then, have patience before you condemn me."

"I do not condemn you, dearest; I only wish to see you happy," said Kate, anxiously.

"Indeed I believe you, *cara miâ*," said Lady Desmond, relaxing from the air of hauteur with which she had last spoken. "Let us, however, drop the disagreeable subject."

And Kate felt she had been treading on forbidden ground.

She retired to her own room after this conversation, and seating herself on the window-seat, thought long though vaguely of the species of unhappy cloud thus thrown over her cousin's life, by the tenacious grasp she had permitted an absorbing passion to take of her heart, hiding from her the beauties and the pleasures which might have colored her life.

"How terrible to be thus dependent for

happiness on the smiles or frowns of a cold-hearted man. Ah ! if my own beloved grand-papa was alive, she would listen to him."

And at that remembrance, her thoughts took a different direction, and dwelt long and sadly on the kind and venerated old man.

Then again the restlessness which ever seized her when she reflected on her utter dependence, returned with startling force, and she felt as if she could, at that moment, set out to seek her fortune alone.

"I will do so, ere long," she thought, "I cannot live always thus ; but, for the present, I must wait. Until Mr. Winter's return—he is so wise, so practical—and I must consider poor nurse before myself. Oh, what an utter change since the day when I walked into the dear old priory drawing-room with my poor Cormac, and found Colonel Egerton there."

And his face, and figure, and voice returned to her memory at her spirits' call, and she

longed, with that intensity with which the prisoner in the body's cage strains itself against its bounds in unutterable pining to devour space—the wish to see him once more, to tell him all about her grandfather's death—her own deep sorrows, absorbed her fancy, and the hours rolled on while she listened in imagination to his rich, full, frank voice—

“ Memory may mock thee with the tones  
So well-known and so dear—  
'Tis but an echo of the past,  
That cheats the longing ear ;  
And thou must strive, and think, and hope,  
And hush each trembling sigh,  
And struggle onward in the way  
Thy destined course doth lie.”

“ Och ! are ye all alone be yerself, asthore ?”  
asked nurse, entering, “ an' the big salt tears  
rowlin' down yer face. What was it vexed  
ye—tell yer own nurse ?”

“Nothing, dear nurse. I was only thinking,” returned Kate, drying her eyes, and endeavoring to smile; “is it time to dress?”

“Nearly, asthore!”

“I wonder Mr. Winter has not written; my last letter remains unanswered,” observed Kate, after a silence of some minutes.

“Ye’ll have one to-morrow, acushla,” said Mrs. O’Toole, who was always ready to promise herself, and those she loved every possible good, in prospect. “An faith ye hav’nt ten minutes left to dress, an’ all thim grand officers an’ ladies to be here to-night; sure I’m as pleased as if I was made Lady Liftant, to see ye among yer own sort again; not goin to thim shopkeepin gentry, at Bayswather, me heavy hatred to it. Thim Miss Merrydeaths, are mighty agreeable young ladies, I see thim walkin the other day, laughin like grigs they wor; what a quare name they have, sure it’s no wondher they’re wishin to change it.”

“Are they?” asked Kate, smiling.

“To be sure they are, it’s not natral for them to be sich playful kittins at their time in life, but may be if they wer quite, they’d be mistakin for full grown cats.”

“Really, nurse, you are so severe this evening, I must run away from you.”

“The blessin iv heaven go with ye, where-ever ye go; an jist let me fasten this top hook; there now, here’s yer gloves, an’ there’s not the like iv ye in the Queen’s Coort, let alone Hampton Coort,” murmured Mrs. O’Toole, as Kate kissed her hand to her, and descended to the drawing-room.

The weather had been rather broken for the last few days, and a dinner at Richmond had carried away the greater part of Lady Desmond’s usual guests. Lady Elizabeth Macdonnell, Colonel Dashwood, Lord Effingham, the doctor, and one or two venerable specimens of whist-players, male and female, completed

the party. The evening was cold for July, and a small bright wood fire was most acceptable.

The whist players were soon absorbed in their rubber, while Kate, Lady Desmond, Lord Effingham and Colonel Dashwood, gathered round the fire. Kate was seated on a low ottoman, Lady Desmond opposite her in an arm chair. Lord Effingham leaning back amongst the cushions of a sofa close to her, with that air of profound quiet and repose, which formed, at times, so admirable a mask to his real sentiments and impressions. Colonel Dashwood stood on the hearth-rug, leaning against the mantel-piece, and occasionally indulging himself in a study of Lady Desmond's profile, when she turned to speak to the Earl. The group was interesting; it bespoke refinement, cultivation, and civilisation in their best form, yet was each member of that little party inflicting or about to inflict suffering on the rest.

Little dreaming of such forebodings, Kate

sat listening to a discussion between Colonel Dashwood and her cousin, on Kean's acting in Sheridan Knowles's play, of "Love," sometimes losing the thread of the argument in her own thoughts, when she was roused by Lady Desmond's pronouncing her name; she looked up suddenly, ashamed of her inattention, and met Lord Effingham's eyes, which wore an expression that puzzled her, as if they had been fixed on her for a long time.

"I beg your pardon Georgy," she said, quickly, "I really did not hear what you said."

"It was only to get you to side with me against Colonel Dashwood; but if you were dreaming instead of listening to me, I do not wish for such an ally," said Lady Desmond, laughing.

"But," pursued Colonel Dashwood, in continuation of some previous remark, "Love," in real life, is so different from the strange masquerade it wears on the stage."

“The most perfect description of love is that which Byron gives in his *Corsair*. ‘None are all evil,’ you know the passage,” said Lord Effingham, rousing himself.

“Oh, yes,” cried Kate, eagerly, “it is indeed exquisite, but, ‘John Anderson, my Joe John,’ conveys the idea of true love a great deal more forcibly to my mind.”

“Burns,” said Lord Effingham, “oh, his detestable jargon is too much for me, and I cannot see the poetry of a ballad, about some stupid old woman, who had been drinking ‘usquebaugh,’ till she was maudlin, and then proceeds to make love to her ‘gude mon,’ whose eyes she had probably been scratching out an hour before.”

“Oh, shame, shame, to sully the real beauty of the fancy by so base a construction!” returned Kate.

“Kate worships Burns,” said Lady Desmond, “she has a print of ‘John Anderson,’ opposite

her bed, that her eyes may light upon it on their first opening in the morning."

"It is a sweet ballad, I think, and has an honesty about it, I like ;" observed Dashwood.

"You are right, Colonel Dashwood," said Kate.

"Ah," said Lady Desmond, "you have ruined yourself with Kate, Lord Effingham."

"I hope not ; but Miss Vernon must grant Byron's description to be perfect," he replied.

"Yes, but this is the description of 'Woman's Love,' added Lady Desmond, "no man ever felt the tenderness—

'Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,  
And still, oh, more than all, untired by time.'

which he ascribes to the Corsair."

"And very few women either, Lady Desmond," said the Colonel.

“Certainly not a man so pre-occupied by himself, that personal injury or disappointment, could drive him into warfare with his kind, as Conrad is described to have been,” cried Kate, “it is not such a character that could experience affection so exquisitely self-forgetful.

‘ Which, nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,  
Could render sullen, were she near to smile,  
Nor anger fire, nor sickness fret to vent,  
On her, one murmur of his discontent,  
Which still with joy could meet, with calmness part,  
Lest that his look of grief, should reach her heart.”

Her listeners were silent for a few moments, after the tones of her sweet voice, which had breathed these lines with so true, so tender an emphasis, had ceased.

Lord Effingham raised himself from his re-cumbent position, with a sudden gleam of light in his deep-set eyes.

“Then what description of man do you think likely to feel such love?” asked Lady Desmomd.

“One whom we both knew and loved, might have felt thus, Georgy, and he, indeed, *was* a good man.”

“The contradictions of human nature are incomprehensible, even to profounder philosophers than you are, Miss Vernon,” said the Earl, “and it is not always the most irreproachable characters who have loved most devotedly. But do you not think Conrad justified by the injuries hinted at, in bidding defiance to a world to which he felt himself superior?”

“Yes, I admire Conrad, I confess,” replied Lady Desmond.

“I do not think hatred is ever grand,” said Kate, rather timidly.

“But it is very natural, sometimes, Miss Vernon,” observed Dashwood.

“Miss Vernon would have us turn first one

cheek and then the other to be smitten," said Lord Effingham.

"Yes," said Miss Vernon, colouring, but composed, "I would in that sense in which we were recommended to do so. If Conrad could have loved, as Byron describes, his sense of wrong would have led him to feel a noble pity for his injurers ; revenge would have been merged in an effort to teach them truth by forgiveness ; and which is the grandest creature, the man who, freed from the petty dominion of self, can look down on his own passions from a real eminence, or he who is their willing slave ; before whose frown

"Hope withering fled, and mercy sighed farewell !"

"Bravo, Miss Vernon, you have converted me," cried the Colonel.

"Yes," said Lady Desmond, "I believe you are right, Kate."

“You demand perfection,” observed the Earl, gloomily.

“I fear,” said Miss Vernon, half ashamed of her enthusiasm, “I have talked a great deal too much.”

“But the modern school of poets, who draw their inspiration from a mushroom, or pig-sty, or an old man afflicted with the rheumatism, are, I confess, too transcendental for me; I cannot interest myself in such anti-poetical subjects,” remarked Lord Effingham.

“I rather like Longfellow; and Kate, I believe, considers him the first of poets,” said Lady Desmond.

“Not exactly,” replied Miss Vernon.

“Explain then, why it is that such a school has become so prevalent; and in painting too! The Royal Academy is filled with ‘Dames’ schools,’ markets and kitchen scenery, and seems to endeavour in every way to make the modern and ancient style as unlike as the

nature of the art will admit," rejoined the Earl.

"It is the confoundedly democratic tone of society ; none but mechanics have money to buy pictures now," said Colonel Dashwood.

"It is the craving for novelty so prevalent in the present day," said Lady Desmond.

"Mr. Winter," said Miss Vernon, "used to say, that it was the gradual development of truth, that people began to see ; it was absurd to consider that Oriental life had greater elements of poetry than our own, because it was farther off ; or that princes or dukes, kings and queens, were the only subjects fit for poetry and painting, but that we began to feel that life, high or low, wherever sentient beings existed, loved, hated, or struggled, was matter enough for poetry or pictures."

"Mr. Winter is Miss Vernon's mentor, you must know," observed Lady Desmond.

"A capital fellow, he was most kind to

Fred Egerton, so hospitable and droll," said the Colonel.

Further conversation was interrupted by the breaking up of the whist tables, and the subsequent departure of the guests.

"Can you take me into town with you to-morrow?" asked Lady Elizabeth of Lady Desmond.

"Do you know whether Mrs. Meredyth returns from —— to-morrow?"

"They do not come back till next week."

"I am sorry for it; I wished to ask one of the girls to stay with Miss Vernon, she will be all alone."

"How long do you remain in town?" asked Lord Effingham, carelessly.

"Until Friday; I cannot get off a dinner at Mrs. ——'s; and when I am in town, I may as well stay and hear Sir Robert Peel speak on the —— Bill; they say it will come before the House on Thursday night. But I am uneasy about leaving Kate."

“ Well, Miss Vernon, if you are inconsolable for the want of my cousin’s society, I will send an express to recall them.”

“ Oh, I do not mind in the least,” said Kate, hastily, “ that is, of course—”

“ Do not finish, Miss Vernon; you have deeply wounded my feelings for those young ladies,” returned Lord Effingham, smiling, then turning to Lady Desmond; “ I shall probably see you at the House on Thursday evening; I should like to hear Sir Robert.”

And after a few more remarks the party separated.

The next day was Wednesday; and Lady Desmond delayed her departure for the dinner party at Mrs. ——’s, as late as she prudently could, leaving Kate with evident reluctance, and even twice returning from the door to give her some parting injunction, and another last kiss. Kate felt in unusually good spirits; she was unspeakably grateful for her cousin’s affection. And nurse had proved a true prophet-

ess ; for she had received a letter from Winter that morning, thanking her for accepting his gift, and giving her his address at a little frontier town, "where," he added, "if you write at once, I can receive a letter, but after that, you must wait till you hear from me." Mrs. Winter, he said, was beginning to get more reconciled to foreign ways. The little artist was evidently enjoying himself ; and the kind, cordial, interested tone of her letter, short though it was, gave Kate a sensation of light-heartedness to which she had been long a stranger. She took a pleasant walk with nurse in Bushy Park, and made that worthy individual join her at tea.

Her first act, the next day, was to write a long and cheerful letter in reply to Winter's. She dilated much upon the kindness she received from Lady Desmond, on her contentment under her roof ; yet she also dwelt on her anxiety to embrace her tried and true friends once more ; and closed her letter with

an exhortation as to their return before the winter set in ; this missive despatched, she determined to take advantage of her unusually good spirits, and turning to the piano, practised delightedly for nearly an hour. She fancied, as exercise gradually restored flexibility to her voice, that it had acquired more richness and power from its long rest ; hitherto she had only contributed instrumental music as her quota to the entertainment of her cousin's guests, and she proceeded to try an air of Gilpin's, to which she had adapted some lines of his sister's, thinking she would surprise and please Lady Desmond on her return. The music, which was simple, but most expressive, and very *sostenuto*, suited both her taste and her powers ; she lingered over it with a sense of keen enjoyment ; and when, at length, the last notes died away, she heaved a light sigh, partly the effect of fatigue ; it was echoed, and turning with a sudden start, she beheld Lord Effingham standing near the window.

“Can you forgive my ill-bred intrusion?” he said, advancing towards her. “I have been calling on Colonel Dashwood; and walking round here, before mounting my horse, saw the garden-gate open, heard music, yielded to the temptation, and entered through the window.”

“But my cousin is not yet returned,” said Kate, with a smile.

“No, she does not return till to-morrow. I was aware of that; but I was not aware that you sang, and sang as you do. Why have I never heard you before?”

“I have not felt inclined to hear my own voice.”

“And I,” interrupted Lord Effingham, “would never desire to hear any other! speaking or singing, it is ever music to me!”

Kate stepped back in amazement at this address, incapable of reply; and Lord Effingham, after a short pause, as if expecting her to speak, went on rapidly—

“The words, ‘I love you,’ are too miserably weak to express what I feel. I have waited long to discover what your feelings are ; you have not afforded me the slightest clue to them. I can endure your strange unconsciousness no longer, and am determined to lay mine bare before you in unmistakeable array. Kate ! Miss Vernon, I know our natures are wide apart as heaven and earth, but still I can feel, in my inmost heart, that you have attained to a better and purer atmosphere than I have ever breathed. I know, that in your hands, I should be different from what I am. I tell you, that every shadow of good in me clings round you ; and if you do not love me now, at least think before you—”

“Lord Effingham,” cried Kate, covering her face with one hand, and extending the other before her, “give me a moment’s thought to distinguish if this be not some horrid dream !”

“No, it is no dream, Miss Vernon,” said

Lord Effingham, recalled, by her evident alarm, from his passionate outburst.

She uncovered her eyes, and looking steadily at him, exclaimed—

“How could you act with such dissimulation? Why have you so deceived us?”

“I have not deceived you; nor am I answerable for the self-deception of others; but this is no answer.”

“But my cousin, Lady Desmond,” resumed Kate, still too bewildered to think of, or choose her words, “you love her. What, what is the meaning of this extraordinary address to me?”

Lord Effingham’s pale, dark cheek did not change its colour by a shade; his firm, resolute mouth assumed even a sterner expression than usual, as he replied—

“Think over the past few months, and say honestly has there been a trace of the lover discoverable in my manner towards your cousin;

except by eyes prompted to find out what did not exist."

"But," said Kate, anxious to screen her cousin, and not to admit too much, though ill able to cope with the far-seeing accomplished man of the world, "people said you were engaged to her, you must have loved her."

"Never," cried Lord Effingham. "Why talk of Lady Desmond? I never loved her—I may have admired her. I may have liked to feel my power over a proud spirit; but you, and you only, have I ever loved—loved with all the energy of my better nature; hear me, Kate!" and he threw himself at her feet; "do not turn from me with such repugnance—I will wait patiently till you think differently of me. I have overcome difficulties for far lesser objects; for you I will conquer myself—speak to me. I have borne suspense long, in silence—can you love me?"

"No," said Kate, deliberately drawing the hand he had seized, quickly from his grasp,

“ I cannot love you, for I cannot trust you ; you think you love *me*, because you see you have no influence over my heart ; Lord Effingham, you do not know what love is, you must change your nature first.”

“ Ha,” said he, quickly, and sullenly, “ but you do, you love aonther.”

“ I entreat of you to leave me, and end this distressing scene, I feel too shocked, too agitated to speak more to you ; go, Lord Effingham, and let us not meet again.”

“ I *will* see you again, however,” replied Lord Effingham. “ Think, Miss Vernon, think, before you utterly reject me ; I love you, I did not know I was capable of the love with which you have inspired me ; I am cold and indifferent to the world, the warmth and tenderness of my inmost heart shall be lavished on you ; you like to help those who are in distress ; think what ample means of good would be at the disposal of the Countess of Effingham ! What is there in me so repellant to you ?”

“This is useless my Lord, I have never thought of you even as a friend ; yet I do not wish to speak harshly. You do not know the injury this unfortunate disclosure will prove to me—I.”

“There can be no necessity to inform your cousin of what has passed. Let me come here as before, and endeavour to ——.”

“No !” cried Kate, indignantly, “I have been too long, unconsciously, aiding deception that I abhor, and my first act, when we meet, shall be to inform my cousin most fully. Now go ! I beg you will leave me, Lord Effingham,” she added, with an air of decision and *hauteur*.

“I obey you, but I do not, and will not consider the subject ended here.” He drew nearer, looked at her a moment, and exclaimed, “No, I will not easily relinquish the brightest hope my life ever held out.” Then turning away quickly, stepped through the window, descended from the verandah, and was out of

sight before Kate could draw the long breath of relief with which she hailed his departure.

She little knew the trial yet awaiting her, though she looked forward with no small dread to the task of disclosing this strange interview to her cousin.

Wrapt in mingling emotions of amazement and alarm, Kate had not heard a light step in the adjoining room ; and Lord Effingham, too much engrossed by the passion of the moment, was equally regardless. Both had been standing near the window by which he had entered, while an unseen witness gazed with the fascination of dismay and bitter mortification, through the opposite dcor, which was partly open.

Something had occurred to postpone the debate which Lady Desmond had wished to hear ; and scarcely regretting the disappointment in her anxiety to return to Kate, had left town early, and on her arrival at home, having

asked if Miss Vernon was at home, and being answered in the affirmative, walked at once to the morning-room they usually occupied; as she crossed the drawing-room communicating with it, she heard, to her astonishment, Lord Effingham's well-known voice, at the moment he raised it exclaiming—"Why talk of Lady Desmond? I never loved her, &c."—and reached the door in time to see him at Kate's feet, as she had longed to see him at her own. Every syllable of that torturing sentence seemed burning into her heart, as retaining sufficient self-command to retire, unseen, she rushed to her own chamber to hide from every eye, but that of the All-seeing, the awful agonies of a desolated spirit.

With agonised distinctness, she reviewed the last three months, and in the new and sudden light thus forced upon her, was compelled to own, that, had not previous impressions blinded her judgment, she might have seen

she was not Lord Effingham's sole attraction in his frequent visits. Then again came the recollection of a thousand allusions to former scenes and passages in their intercourse, capable of a double signification, on which she had put but one; a thousand looks and tones, slight in themselves, but now irrefragable proofs that she had been duped; and Kate, could she have been a party in the deception, she to whom all the weakness, so carefully hidden from others, had been fully displayed, she on whom Lady Desmond had ever looked as the very personation of truth. Impossible! yet why was Lord Effingham admitted secretly? Why did Kate seem so ready and willing to be left alone? Why did she so pertinaciously endeavour to turn her from her unfortunate attachment; and Lady Desmond groaned aloud as these, to her tempest-tossed mind, incontrovertible proofs of treachery rose up before it. "But his influence is irresistible, and how was she to be wiser than I was. Why am I

called beautiful?" And she flew to the glass : it flung back the image of a countenance so darkened and disturbed by the storm within, that she shrank from it. "Ah, she has the lovely freshness of youth, and I, why have I outlived it?" Then she remembered the evident joy of Lord Effingham, the first day he met her at Richmond ; she recalled the rapture with which she had hailed that joy, "and but for her all might have been well ; if she had been candid with me, how much I might have been spared ; but such deliberate treachery." And again and again, did her troubled thoughts work round the painful circle of unanticipated mortification which had so suddenly risen up around her ; each time returning with redoubled rage and bitterness to Kate's supposed duplicity, for it never occurred to her to doubt that Lord Effingham's love was reciprocated.

How long she had lain, her head buried in the cushions of the sofa, striving to find some loop-hole through which her wounded self-love

might creep from the storm that beat it to the ground she could not tell. Ages seemed to have passed since she left the carriage, which had conveyed her to so much misery ; but at last the door was opened, and Kate entered, she looked pale and agitated, and exclaimed—

“ I had no idea you had returned, dear Georgy.”

Lady Desmond raised her eyes with such a look of dark resentment, of concentrated indignation, that, innocent as she was, Kate recoiled before it with the confusion of guilt.

“ Ay, shrink back from my presence,” said her cousin, in low, deep, tones, as if she dared not lose control of her voice. “ Traitor ! long practice might have taught you more art than to quail at my first glance. Lord Effingham can place full faith in a wife, who, for months, deliberately deceived and duped her friend, leading her to pour forth the last secrets she would have confided to a rival. False, false heart, I loved you, I trusted you ; I heaped

benefits upon you ; I cared for my wealth only because it might be of use to you ; and, in return, you have crept into the very sanctuary of my soul to rob and desecrate it ; is this the truth, the honor of D'Arcy Vernon's grandchild ?”

She had risen in her wrath, and stood—her long black hair thrown wildly back—nervously grasping the back of the sofa, on which she had lain, and gazing with pitiless eyes on the slight shrinking figure before her.

“ Georgy, hear me, I implore you,” cried Kate, trembling in every limb, and feeling, in spite of her conscious rectitude, as though she was guilty, before her cousin’s impassioned reproaches.

“ Hush,” returned Lady Desmond, with a wild gesture of command and horror, “ let me hear no well-arranged tissue of falsehoods. Your very voice is pregnant with dissimulation ; go—relieve me of the sight of so much treachery.”

“Not till you have heard me,” said Kate, with firmness, recalled, by Lady Desmond’s unjust reproaches, from the excessive commiseration which at first had unnerved her. “Why do you suppose I am a participator in Lord Effingham’s deception? Why do you imagine that an acquaintance of but three months’ standing could so influence me, as to change my entire previous principles? You are excited. You are wretched. And God knows how deeply I feel for you; but, Georgy, do not be unjust.”

“Oh I have the boon of your pity.” returned Lady Desmond, between her clenched teeth. “But I am not yet reduced to accept it. Lord Effingham shall know how his future wife was trusted, and how she betrayed. Go—I desire you to leave me; I can support your presence no longer.”

“I will leave you,” said Kate, with mournful sweetness, “but I leave you this solemn assurance, that however you may misjudge me,

I would rather die than wed a man I dread so much, and love so little, as Lord Effingham."

"Ha," said Lady Desmond, drawing a long breath, her wild indignant rage stilled for a moment by the unmistakeable truth which spoke in Kate's voice and manner. "I must think. But go, guilty or innocent, we can never be the same to each other again."

## CHAPTER VI.

## ARRANGEMENTS.

WITH every pulse tumultuously throbbing, Kate closed her door, and sat down to attempt the disentanglement of the wild agitation and confusion into which all her thoughts and anticipations had been thrown by this dreadful outburst from her cousin. Never since the day that Winter had first intimated to her his opinion of the state of their affairs, had she experienced the same sudden sense of insecurity and desolation. Then she had had a full and sufficient object, round which to rally her energies and her courage; then she had had clear-headed and warm-hearted friends to

advise and to uphold her. Now the one only friend, who was all that was left to her of the past, seemed suddenly rent from her by the most cruel and injurious suspicions, and a great gulf fixed between them. For Lady Desmond's last words—"Guilty or innocent, we can never be the same to each other again"—rung in her ears like an ill omened prophecy. Yet her own immediate suffering was almost lost sight of in her deep compassion for, and sympathy with, her cousin.

She had anticipated a wild outbreak of indignant sorrow when Lady Desmond should first hear the terrible solution of his mysterious conduct, with which Lord Effingham had astonished the real object of his affections. But that she should be accused of deliberate treachery, of such complete and constant dissimulation, had never entered into her heart to conceive. A warm flush of indignant color rose to her brow as she thought of the injustice, and she murmured, almost aloud—

“She should have known me better. She who knew my childhood ; how dare she think me so inferior to herself ? She must, when she is calmer, acknowledge her error.”

Then Kate recalled to her memory the whole scene, and wondered, in vain, how her cousin had been informed of Lord Effingham’s presence, and the purpose of his strange visit. Continued thought suggested that she must have overheard what had taken place. Yet, if so, she must have heard Kate’s utter rejection of him—this was a painful enigma. How—how was she to clear herself ? She knew not from what source Lady Desmond’s impression arose, and she was utterly ignorant in what way she should proceed to free her cousin’s mind from the injurious doubts which had taken possession of it ; for her indignation was soon merged in tender pity and compassion for her wretched relative.

“Unhappy Georgy,” she exclaimed, “not content with the real injury and mortification

you have sustained, you torture yourself doubly by believing me—me, to whom you acted more than a sister's—a mother's part—so false, so worthless; but how am I to justify myself? to convince you?"

Then rose up, in formidable array, the gossip of servants, and worse, *dear friends*, to be met and silenced, and the anxious desire to save her cousin's name from the flattering comments of the rather unmerciful, though well-bred *coterie*, amongst whom they were placed. Above all the predominant idea in poor Kate's mind was that her interval of repose was at an end—that the only home to which she had a shadow of claim was rent from her—that to remain the recipient of benefits from an estranged benefactress, was impossible—that she was indeed desolate. Mingling with all this, was the memory of her grandfather's implicit trust, his unwearied tenderness—that it had gone from her life *for ever*.

Yes, she must go—she must seek some other home—she must earn one. And nurse—her curiosity must be baffled. And time was stealing fast away while she thought so painfully and ineffectually ; something must be done ; and at once, she rose with a fervent ejaculation —“ God guide me for the best,” and sat down to write to Lady Desmond.

As she opened her desk, the recollection of the happy letter she had that morning despatched to Winter flashed across her mind.

“ And when shall I hear from him again ? ” she thought—a glance at her watch. “ Ah, post-hour is long past ; and what else could I write without betraying Georgy ? and she must be my first consideration. Would to Heaven Mr. Winter was in England ; but it is in vain to wish.”

And overpowered by her complete isolation, she threw herself on her knees beside her bed, and, hiding her face in the clothes, gave way to the thick coming sobs that shook her frame,

and ceased only when they had exhausted the power to express such emotion.

At length she arose, calmed by this outburst, and restored to more faith than she had hitherto felt by the unspoken prayer, in which she had silently laid the grief she was incapable of uttering before the All-seeing and Mighty Spirit, who alone witnessed her sorrow, pressing her hand against her forehead, as if to condense her thoughts, she wrote :

“I must see and speak to you. Have you not thought, in the silence of the last few hours, of a thousand indications that I am not the base wretch you fancied me. Remember, we have shared the same home, where the very soul of honour presided. Look into your own heart, see how far that has impressed you, and judge me by yourself. I never overcame, although I tried, the secret repugnance with which Lord Effingham inspired me—an instinct which his conduct this day has justified ; and

until this day, I had not the remotest idea of his preference for me. Be just, Georgina, my own dear cousin. Oh, with what true, what unbroken affection I write these words. You cannot doubt me.

“I must see you—there is much for us to arrange—and at once; we must guard ourselves from the animadversions of the people about us; let me see you; tell me why—tell me what suggested the terrible reproaches with which you overwhelmed me? I have ever loved you—ever linked you with all that is dearest and most sacred in my memory. Oh, judge me by your own heart, and say could a stranger, a man known but yesterday, of whose previous conduct, selfish, petty, unmanly, as it was, I was fully aware; could he make me so utterly forget my holiest memories, my deepest obligations, my loyalty to my sex, my faith to you! in much you are my superior; but I am as true to you as you are to yourself.”

She read this over, felt dissatisfied with it, yet despairing of writing anything that could please her more, hastily added—"I wait your reply," signed her name, and, unlocking her door, stole lightly to Lady Desmond's, she knocked, and, after a short delay, Lady Desmond asked, in a constrained voice—

"Is that Louise? I have a dreadful headache, and am lying down—I cannot be disturbed."

"It is not Louise—I have a note for you." Another pause, and the door was unlocked. Lady Desmond, still in her carriage dress, put out her hand, silently took the note, and closed the door.

Kate again returned to her own room and to her troubled thoughts, thankful for nurse's absence, unusual at that hour, and feeling somewhat relieved by having put things *en train* for an interview with her cousin; her natural fortitude, of which she possessed so much, began to rise out of the terrible wreck of

pleasant things which had weighed it down, and to consider the future with greater clearness, when Louise entered about an hour after the delivery of the note to Lady Desmond, and close upon their usual dinner hour.

“Miladi’s love, and she is not at all well; she wish to see *Mademoiselle sur l’instant.*”

Kate would have faced the most deadly peril with far less tremor than her really much-loved cousin; she felt, however, that the message sounded friendly, little imagining that “Miladi’s love” was an addition of Louise’s, who never could conceive one to Miss Vernon unprefaced by some such sugary prefix. Kate found Lady Desmond lying on the sofa, looking deadly pale and exhausted; she held the note in her hand.

“You are right,” she exclaimed abruptly, as Kate shut the door and stood before her; “we have much to arrange, for inaction is torture.” Her voice sounded deep and broken, different from its usual harmonious refinement. She

rose and paced the room. “Your note has raised a thousand recollections which range themselves on your side, Kate. I must, I dare not doubt you; there would be no confidence left to me on earth if I did!—let us mention it no more. No!” motioning Kate back, as she sprang to throw her arms round her at these words—“I am in no mood for tenderness. Whether intentionally or not you have inflicted terrible sufferings upon me. I repeat, I cannot doubt you—it would be too revolting—I could not endure such a double trial. I may be very wrong, bat I cannot look upon you as I did, not yet at least; and your question, how I acquired the accursed knowledge, I will never answer, and you must never ask again: he need not have enhanced his love for you by his triumph over me!” She muttered these words between her teeth, glancing darkly at Kate. “I sent for you,” she resumed hurriedly, “for your note reminded me of what was due to myself. We must subdue ourselves, and act

our part for the audience of Hampton Court. I have thought of a plausible tale; attend to me; learn your part, and remember you owe me the reparation of performing it well. I am not well. God knows that is true! I have received news that compels me to leave for Ireland as soon as I can. We will endure each other for a week, Kate. I little thought I could ever speak so to you. My own dear Kate, come—yet, no, no! I cannot embrace you. Oh! I am most miserable, to be debarred in this wretchedness from the only sympathy that could have soothed me."

"But you have it," answered Kate, in accents of the softest, deepest tenderness.

"I will not have your pity," resuming her troubled walk. "I will not have that Devil sneer at my credulity. I will wait and see before I take you to my arms again. Yes, we must part for a time. I could not bear the alternate affection for, and doubt of you, which sweep across my mind. I will see if he cannot

yet prevail on you to overcome that repugnance which—pah ! repugnance to *him* ! Well, Kate, do not mind me ; I cannot speak coherently ; remember we have a part to play for a while together, then separately ; and where—where can you go ? I am selfish—I hate myself ; but for a short time we will separate ; and Kate, you will not disdain—you will not forget it is my duty to provide for you. I promised your grandfather!—and, oh ! heavens, how am I fulfilling the guardianship I undertook ! But you will command all that your lightest fancy may prompt. I am rich, and after a while we will be together.”

“ Georgy,” said Kate, with calmness inexpressibly sad, “ I see you do not yet believe me, but in time you must ; till then we need not embitter each other’s lives. When you leave this for Ireland, I will go to Mrs. Storey ; she has often invited me ; from that I can write to you. The Winters will be home ere long, and when, in God’s good time, you *know*

that I never deceived or betrayed you, we will meet again. I have enough for every present want, and you must not think me so much beneath yourself that I would accept the charity of her who thinks me unworthy. There is only one favour I must ask—it is to help me in keeping nurse—my poor dear nurse—(the only one who still loves and trusts Kate Vernon)—in the dark as regards this unhappy breach ; it would break her heart if she knew of it—”

“ I will do as you desire ; but, Kate, you must allow me——”

“ Hush !” said Kate, with a slight but inexpressibly dignified gesture of rejection, that compelled Lady Desmond to silence. “ I am most anxious about nurse ; I cannot take her with me, and I feel her to be a friend too dear, too closely associated with all I love, to part from as I would a common servant ;” and the swelling of Kate’s heart at the idea of breaking this last link choked her utterance.

“ She shall come with me—she shall stay

with me," said Lady Desmond eagerly, "until you join me again; it is natural that you should accept Mrs. Storey's invitation, still more so that you should not crowd her establishment unnecessarily. Nurse will surely not object to a separation for a few weeks, she will not think it strange."

"Leave nurse to me," said Kate, anxious to relieve her cousin's mind of the slight uneasiness which inflected her voice; "she will be difficult to manage, but you may trust me with her."

"There is nothing to be managed," said Lady Desmond, with cold hauteur. "But we have agreed to endeavour to avoid any gossip that might arise from —; though why should I fear any. You will write to Mrs. Storey, and see nurse, and to-morrow—." Lady Desmond paused, gazed stedfastly at vacancy, and then drawing a long breath, continued, in a tone of intense resolution, "To-morrow I shall receive those people as usual."

“Oh, impossible,” cried Kate, in genuine anxiety that her cousin should not overtask her strength.

“Why impossible, Miss Vernon?” asked Lady Desmond, in a constrained voice. “Does your ‘instinctive repugnance’ to Lord Effingham permit so high an estimate of his fascinating powers, that you imagine self-esteem and self-respect rendered incapable of acting under his indifference; you little know me. I tell you, if he presents himself here to-morrow evening, neither of you shall see the slightest change in my manner—neither of you shall see a trace of the torture—”

“Georgy, dear Georgy,” cried Kate, whose candid mind revolted from the strange constraint forced on it by her cousin, “be just to me, be merciful to yourself, I know it is agony to doubt me.”

“God knows it is,” she returned, “but at present I cannot trust you or any one, my soul is embittered; time only can show me the truth;

and restore me to myself—to you. Kate, if you have deceived me ; no ! you could not ! there is no falsehood in that face ! Oh that I could read your heart ; *if* you have deceived me, God forgive you, if not, bear with me, pardon me."

Her voice sank to the softest, tenderest accents, "Remember, I never had the holy love for father or mother to fill and soften my heart ; to teach it true affection; to plant in it a pure unselfish principle, a sacrificing spirit whereby to test the seeming passion offered to me. *You* have known this, you have this invaluable touchstone, this unerring balance wherewith to weigh the false jewels which hollow-hearted men of the world offer, in exchange for real gems, fresh truth and warm devotion. Yes you may have weighed his and found them wanting ; but you could never love him, as I do, as I did ; we are alike, as substance and shadow, there is not a change of his countenance, an inflection of his voice that I cannot read ; shame shame to speak so ! and I have known so little

happiness, I have sought my whole life for some unknown treasure to catch the first glimpse of it as it was lost to me for ever."

And at last the dark, burning eyes were suffused with the blessed refreshment of tears ; but Lady Desmond's were always stormy tears ; and Kate stole nearer to her in the tenderest most loving sympathy for that poor, proud, wounded heart—yet silently, for she feared the sound of her voice might recall her cousin's suspicions, and she would spurn her from her—kneeling at her feet and kissing the hand that hung down in inactivity bespeaking the language of despair.

At last Lady Desmond pressed the hand that held hers so lovingly, and drawing Kate slightly to her, muttered in tones more like her own than Kate had yet heard, " leave me now, while I feel I have wronged you, ask me no more at present," and grateful even for these words Kate slowly retired.

The next evening did indeed display the wonderful strength which pride can lend a mor-

tified spirit, never had Lady Desmond played the part of a gracious graceful hostess to greater perfection ; the only difference which Kate's watchful eye could detect, was a slight increase of animation in her manner, and of brilliancy in her conversation ; just enough to lead careless observers to imagine that she enjoyed the prospect of her intended visit to Ireland, which with may politely expressed regrets she announced to her company.

The evening glided on with more than usual agreeability, to the guests at least ; the only grave faces present were Miss Vernon's and Colonel Dashwood's, he seemed quite upset by the intelligence of their approaching departure, and joined but little in the noisy and probably sincere regrets of the rest. Burton was there, he had not been a frequent guest, having been generally quartered with another detachment. "I regret to find that you are going to leave this place, Miss Vernon, just as I am about to take up my abode in it," said Burton during

the loudest notes of a bravura sung by Miss Meredyth, “I have heard so much, yet I seem doomed to see so little of you.”

“I did not know I was so famous,” replied Kate, absently.

“Nor am I the only one, ‘left lamenting,’ by this sudden flight; look at Dashwood! then we all fear that Miss Vernon will not return from Ireland,” said Burton.

Kate, whose attention was fixed upon the opening door answered by a smile so palpably *distract*, that Burton, fancying he guessed the secret of her watchfulness, smiled too as he thought of the sincere affection with which she had inspired his absent friend, and said to himself, “She would be a happier woman following Fred. on a baggage waggon, than riding over the world in that *roué* Effingham’s coro-netted carriage. She does not think so at present however, *ainsi va le monde*.

Here the song ended, and Miss Vernon was called on to play; she thought sadly of her yesterday’s practice and its unhappy termina-

tion, and it required no small effort of self command to take her place at the piano; she played mechanically, and without her usual soul-touching expression.

“Pray Lady Desmond,” she heard Mrs. Meredyth ask, “can you give me any account of my nephew Effingham; will he be here this evening?”

“I really do not know,” replied Lady Desmond in wonderfully natural, unconstrained tones, “Miss Vernon, I fancy, saw him last; did Lord Effingham say he would come here this evening, Kate?”

“He said nothing, that is, I do not remember,” replied Kate, confused and astonished at the coolness of this appeal. Lady Desmond glanced at her one speaking look that roused her to instant self-possession, though it made her heart beat.

“I am told, Lord Effingham started this morning for the Isle of Wight,” said Colonel Dashwood with a gravity unusual for him.

“Hauton was over at Richmond and heard it there, something about his new yacht I believe, they said he will return next week.”

“*Figurez vous,*” cried the second Miss Mere-dyth whose style was foreign and fantastic, “my cousin’s dismay when he returns and finds Lady Desmond flown.”

“Perhaps it will be no great surprise to him,” said Colonel Dashwood in a low voice to Kate.

“Yes, I am sure it will,” she replied.

Lady Desmond invited the whole party, then assembled, to meet again, on the Wednesday evening following at her house ; her last evening she said, as she intended starting on Thursday for London to Ireland.

“Kate,” she observed carelessly to one or two of her latest guests “is not half so true an Irishwoman as I am ; she will not, I believe, accompany me at once, but lingers for a few weeks with some friends in town.”

Kate felt the tears rise to her eyes at hearing the separation so deplored, so dreaded by her, thus indifferently announced by her cousin, and

she stood silent and dejected by the piano.

After they were left alone, Lady Desmond threw herself into an arm chair and covering her face with her hands groaned aloud, then looking up, after a moment's silence, she showed a countenance so changed, so haggard, now that the strong curb of her will over her secret emotions was relaxed, that Miss Vernon absolutely started with surprise.

“Have you written to Mrs. Storey?”

“Yes.”

“Have you spoken to nurse?”

“No; I thought it best to defer that until I got an answer.”

“As you choose.”

She rose slowly, and walked to the door, then turning, said—

“I have accepted every invitation offered to me—we have not an evening disengaged; but if you feel bored by them, or wish, for any reason, to remain at home, do not think yourself obliged to accompany me.” She bowed,

then again pausing. "You look wearied, Kate, would you like nurse to sleep in your room?"

"No."

"Solitude is best for both, I believe."

And she left the room gloomily, darkly.

Kate felt relieved when she was gone, and retired quickly. To pray to God, to think long and painfully, to count the night-watches, and, at last, to sink into a sound, sweet sleep, and charming but indistinct dreams of her cousin clasping her to her heart, and entreating forgiveness for the wrong she had done her.

"Is it very late, nurse?" she asked, on opening her eyes the following morning, and seeing her faithful friend standing by the bedside.

"No, agraah, not to say late; but me lady is aitin' her breakfast up in her own room, an' I wanted to rouse ye up to have a word wid ye, afore she was callin' fur ye. Will ye have a

little taste iv toast an' a cup iv tay quite an' aisy up here?"

"Yes, thank you, nurse, I should like it very much. I will ring presently."

Mrs. O'Toole re-appeared with a most tempting round of buttered toast, a tiny tea-pot, and a capacious cup, and placed them before her nurseling.

"There, ait a bit, jewil ; an' tell me what's the manin' iv this scrimmige iv movin' all iv a suddin'?"

"I thought you were aware that Lady Desmond intended going to Ireland when we left this?"

"To be sure, I did—but sure, isn't it mighty suddint? an' are we to be off body an' bones on Thursday next?"

"Yes, nurse, I believe so."

"An' now, Miss Kate, agrah, will ye tell me, is it a weddin' we're goin' to have, or what, fur I feel that somethin' quare's goin' on!"

“Oh, there is nothing the matter, nurse. I believe,” she continued, after a short pause, during which she summoned all her resolution to speak easily and unconstrained, “that is, I think I must stay for a few weeks with Mrs. Storey.”

“What, not go wid us at wanst to Ireland !” ejaculated Mrs. O’Toole, holding the tea-pot, from which she was in the act of replenishing her nurseling’s cup, still suspended, in sheer amazement. “What’s that for ? sure, yer not goin’ to send me off wid me lady ! if yer not comin’ wid us now, sure. I’ll have to come for ye ; ye can’t travel be yerself ; an’ I’d betther stay wid ye.”

“But Mrs. Storey has not room, I fear,” said Kate, falteringly.

“I don’t want to be behoulden to her fur her room ; sure, I could get a place convani-ent for meself ; there’s lashins iv poor places good enough for the likes iv me about Bays-

wather to stop in ; what would ye do widout me ?”

“ What indeed !” echoed Kate, throwing herself into nurse’s arms ; and worn out by the long constraint she had laboured under, she burst into an irrepressible flood of tears, while Mrs. O’Toole hushed and soothed her, as in her childish days.

“ There now, hush, darlint ; tell me what it vexes ye ?”

“ I am so afraid you will think me ungrateful and selfish, dear nurse,” began Kate, in broken accents, interrupted by sobs. “ You see I am particularly anxious to stay in London for a while ; and if—if I was richer, and could pay for your lodgings, and all that, do you think I could ever part with you, even for a short season, dearest, kindest friend ; but I am not ; and I will not let you waste the little you have on my account. No, you will go with Lady Desmond to Ireland, as she wishes, till I join her.”

Mrs. O'Toole seemed plunged in thought, and rolled her arms in her apron, a favourite attitude with her, indicative of deep reflection.

“But will ye come back?” she asked, at last, with a keen glance, “an’ whin? there’s somethin’s throublin’ ye, jewil, though ye’ll not spake out, an’ me heart’s oneasy; sure, ye wouldn’t let me go from ye, if ye wern’t manin’ to come back to me; sure, ye wouldn’t thrate me that a way, me own child?”

“God knows,” cried Kate, “it is hard enough to part with you, although I most firmly purpose to be with you ere long; but to say good bye in earnest would be death to me.”

“An’ why need ye stay wid them Storeys that arn’t yer aiquils at all? Ah! where’s the use of sthrivin’ to decave me. Have you an’ me lady fell out, asthore?”

This question was put with a concentration of anxiety and curiosity which might have raised a smile to the lips of a casual observer,

but which only served to fill up the measure of Kate's perplexities—her equally balanced cares—not to betray her cousin, and not to wound nurse, placing her in a double difficulty.

“No, no ! quarrel with my dear, kind Georgy ! Never, I trust ; but, in short, dearest nurse,” she continued, with great earnestness, “it would be a source of the greatest comfort to me, to know that you were safe and free from every want, in an establishment such as hers. I am powerless to afford any aid or protection to my oldest, truest friend,” pursued Kate, large tears weighing down her eyelashes. “And after years of faithful, constant, self-devoted service, I must owe to another the shelter I cannot give you. Ah ! it is a hard fate !”

She hid her face on nurse’s shoulder.

“Och ! don’t be talking that away, jewil !” ejaculated Mrs. O’Toole. “Sure, haven’t I a power iv money I got in yer sarvice that Mis-

ther Winter put into the bank fur me ? I'll do what iver mee sweet child likes ; but faith ! I don't want shelther from any one. I'm not past mee work yet. And if ye will have me go from ye, I'll just stop wid me lady fur three weeks or a month ; an' at the ind of that time, if yer not comin' to us, I'll come fur ye. Sure, yer in the right iv it not to let Lady Desmond get too accustomed to ye ; faith, it's sick she'd be if an angel from Heaven afther a bit ; it's well fur her the masther (the Lord rest his sowl,) wasn't that sort."

" Dear nurse," said Kate, raising her tearful face, and speaking in broken accents, " why will you distress me by assuming a severe tone towards my kind cousin ; she is all that the most exacting could wish. Oh ! I have many difficulties before me. How ! how ! can I part with you ?"

" An' why do ye ask me to lave ye ?"

" It must be so," she returned, with more

decision than she had yet shown. "And, I will not deceive you, my own, dear nurse—it may be some months before we meet again."

"Och ! where are ye goin' to stop bee yersel', Miss Kate ? What mischief's brewin' at all ? An' what would the masther say if he could look down on us to see me goin' off in pace and plinty, and you wandherin' through the world alone ? Sure, I'd see his sperrit, it couldn't rest in Heaven itself, if you wasn't rightly attended to."

"God forbid he should feel distress about me," sighed Kate. "He is at last free from sin and sorrow—that is my great consolation ! But my plans are very simple. After being with Mrs. Storey for a while, I shall probably go to some other friends, and move about ; so you see you could not exactly come with me. Then, when Mr. and Mrs. Winter return, which, I trust, they will do before October, they know and value you, and will gladly let

me have you; or, probably, before I go to stay with them, I may join my cousin; in either event, we shall be together; and so far as a weak mortal can purpose, I resolve to separate from you no more. Can you consent to this?"

Nurse, resting her elbows on her knees, and covering her face in her hands, rocked herself in silence for a few moments, then with a deep sigh, almost a groan, said—

"I see it's no use talkin', I must go from you—and I'll nivir hear the thruth if what's goin' on! Och, I little thought I'd iver be parted from mee own child—the core iv mee heart ye wor—ye nivir slept a night from oun-dher the same roof wid me but wan, and that was the time ye met the Captin, and I'll nivir believe but that 'll turn out luck yet! so I'll do yer biddin', agra! and sure the masther 'ill see it's only yez own word would part us; an' look here, avourneen, I'll always

keep the price if mee journey by me, and the wind iv a word will bring me to ye any day—remimber that!"

"I will remember, nurse. Ah ! dearest, kindest, hold me to your heart—close—there is none other beats so truly for your Kate—none loves her so well, now grandpapa is gone."

"Faith, there is'nt wan thruer to ye on airth, than mine, as sure as yer lyin' on it. There was wan more loved ye well, besides the masther and me—if iver man loved mortal, the Captin loved the sight iv ye—an' well he might, many's the time I watched his face brighten up when he heard yer voice, an' wancest I seen him take the glove ye dropped an' kiss it, as I would the cross ! and mark my words—ye'll see him yet—och, sure there's some brightness fur us ondher all this sorra ! an' don't sob that away, jewil—if you don't come to me, faith I'll come to you."

This last week at Hampton Court was one of unmixed suffering to Kate. Lady Des-

mond was cruelly capricious in her tone and manner to her innocent cousin. At one moment Kate fancied she could perceive rapidly returning confidence and affection—the next, some stern look, or icy word, implied suspicion and dislike ; nothing wounded Miss Vernon so much as the assumption of her old tenderness before any third party, and the instant return to coldness and estrangement, when that restraint was removed.

Sometimes Kate's gentle but high spirit was roused to indignation, which lent her a momentary strength ; but this was soon dissolved by the compassion with which she viewed the intense and unremitting struggle, which thus clouded Lady Desmond's better judgment.

Miss Vernon was thoroughly convinced before the day of their departure arrived, that to live with Lady Desmond in her present mood, was indeed impossible ; and that her only chance for preserving a hold on her cousin's

heart, was absence. The approaching separation from nurse was ever present with her—from Lady Desmond, she felt, that for a while it would be a relief to part.

Meantime, Mrs. Storey wrote in most cordial terms, to express the pleasure she felt in expecting Miss Vernon as a guest; and all things progressed smoothly for the cousins' plans.

The last evening, Kate felt real alarm, at the strange brilliancy of her cousin's eyes, and the unwonted animation of her manner. She had passed the greater part of the day alone; and had once sent for Kate, who found her terribly agitated, and evidently endeavouring to make up her mind to something; after a few vague words, however, she begged Kate to leave her—that she would defer all further arrangements till they were in London; and as Miss Vernon was leaving the room, begged her to keep guard over herself, in case any unexpected arrival should startle her. “Do

not betray me, Kate." Miss Vernon knew she alluded to Lord Effingham—but since the fatal day she had overheard his declaration, she had never breathed his name to her ; but the evening wore on, and to Kate's infinite relief, he did not make his appearance.

Kate never quitted any place with so little regret, as Hampton Court ; though, at first, she had liked it much—difficulties soon gathered round her—difficulties, such as she had never before encountered ; but she was wofully depressed—Lady Desmond had put a finishing stroke to her low spirits, by enquiring if she would like to drive directly to Mrs. Storey's, or go with her to Mivart's in the first place. This readiness to get rid of her on the part of her natural protectress, threw a sad feeling of gloom and loneliness over poor Kate's heart, and it was some moments before she could reply. Her first impulse was to accede at once to the proposition, which would have relieved her cousin of her irksome pre-

sence ; but an instant's thought, showed her two potent reasons for a different line of conduct—first, she must cling as long as she possibly could to nurse—secondly, she knew Mrs. Storey did not expect her till the next day, so having glanced at these motives, and swallowed a rising inclination to sob, she answered, with a certain degree of reproachful sadness—

“I do not think Mrs. Storey expects me till to-morrow ; and if you can bear my presence a little longer, I should prefer waiting till then. Dear cousin, though you are weary of me, I think of our parting with grief, and regret.”

“Oh, Kate, Kate,” cried Lady Desmond, pressing her handkerchief to her eyes “would to God, I could blot out the last few months—I feel I am utterly neglecting my bounden duty in thus leaving you—but it is better for both of us, at least for awhile ! Do you for-

give me ? you would if you knew the wretched sea of doubt and difficulty and suspicion in which my weary spirit is tossed ! I should make you miserable if you stayed with me .”

“ I am most fully determined, even if you were not so inclined, to leave you ; at present it is quite as much my choice, as yours—do not grieve about that—but—but, dear Georgy, do not seem so anxious to get rid of me !”

“ What a selfish, worthless wretch I have become,” said Lady Desmond, with sudden remorse, “ I am not the same for an hour—at this moment I would fain keep you with me to the last ! but Saturday, the day after to-morrow, I leave for Ireland ; till then, you shall stay with me—you would like to stay with nurse, at all events—how could I forget, ah ! Kate forgive me ! you may, you ought ; God knows how much misery you have caused me,” she ended bitterly.

Kate sighed to see how implacable were

the suspicions entertained by Lady Desmond ; and the rest of the journey was performed in almost unbroken and melancholy silence.

Miss Vernon wrote a line, to announce her arrival in town, to Mrs. Storey ; and then, leaving her cousin to receive the thousand and one visitors, who flocked to remonstrate with, and exclaim at her strange whim of performing a personal, and purgatorial progress to her estates in Ireland, she sought the society of poor nurse, who was plunged into the deepest affliction—

“ I’ll never forgive mee Lady Desmond, fur lettin’ ye stay behind this away. There’s no use in talkin’ but I know there’s been some ruction betune yez—any ways, I’ll do yer biddin’, an’ stay out the four weeks wid her ; but afther that, don’t lay a vow upon me, avourneen ! an’ ye’ll write me long lettters.”

“ Write ! Ah, yes, it will be my only com-

fort until we meet—for we must—we shall meet soon again.”

And Miss Vernon threw herself on nurse’s bosom, overpowered by the feelings she had so long suppressed. Long and passionately did she weep—and nurse, nobly hushing her own grief, strove to cheer her child, whose unwonted emotion absolutely frightened the honest, warm-hearted woman. Gradually Kate listened to her words, rallied herself from the flood of bitterness which had swept over her spirit, and after some desultory and mournful conversation, obeyed nurse’s kindly command.

“ There’s no use talking any more darlin, you must go to yer bed.”

Kate, fatigued by the tears and sorrow of the day, was soon wrapped in sleep ; and nurse bent over her long and tenderly as she lay, one long wavy tress escaping from the deep lace of her cap, her hands crossed upon her bosom,

which heaved slightly with each regular softly drawn breath, the rosy lips apart, while

“ On her snowy lids, whose texture fine  
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,  
The baby sleep—lies pillow’d.”

As nurse gazed at this picture of profound and innocent repose, lovely as sleeping youth must be, to every eye capable of acknowledging beauty, all her own grief at the separation of to-morrow pressed quick and stern upon her.

“ Ah, wh’ll watch over ye, pulse iv me heart? Who’ll ye go spake to when yer in throuble? Where will ye turn when yer spirit scorns the ways iv them that’s about ye. Ah, where indeed! Oh, Mary, sweet queen of heaven, look on ye. Sure ye niver had a purer heart than hers. Blessed Jasus shield ye. Ah, Captin, agra, it’s here ye ought to be,

with the warm heart an' the strong arm to hold her up through this weary world."

And sinking on her knees, nurse devoutly told her beads, often wiping away the fast-falling tears, yet, with the peculiarity of her race, fervently hoping through it all.

"There is a prescience given to grief,  
Which joy may never know,  
A hope of future good, to cheer,  
The ruggedness of woe !  
It is the soul's deep whisper heard  
When earth's rude tumult sleeps,  
A moment hushed, when pain or grief,  
Across the spirit sweeps.  
Then through the gloom of doubt and dread,  
An angel voice we hear,  
Which speaks its inborn happiness,  
Undimmed by grief or fear."

## CHAPTER VII.

## TERRA INCOGNITA.

“THERE is one thing more I wish to say to you, dearest nurse,” said Miss Vernon, as she was dressing to go to Mrs. Storey the morning after the conversation above recorded; all her trunks and packages were lying about the room in desolate disorder, and she was hurrying to join her cousin at luncheon.

“What is it, agra?”

“Why, that cheque Mr. Winter sent me—Roberts got me the money for it.”

“Misther Roberts is a knowledgeable man.”

“But, nurse, this portion of it is for you.”

“Oh, blessed Vargin ! look at this. Now, Miss Kate, do you think I’d be afther robbin ye iv twenty pounds—and I wid a pile iv notes in the savin’s bank, if I could only get at them.”

“ That is it, exactly,” interrupted Miss Vernon, hastily, “ you must have money, and though you and I are on those terms, that we do not keep debtor and creditor accounts, you know very well, I consider it not only a pleasure, but a duty, to share with you whatever I possess, only in this case, I have kept the lion’s share—no more, nurse—you must take it—I shall think you do not love me if you refuse.”

There was something so urgent in Miss Vernon’s tones, that nurse felt herself compelled to obey, *malgré lui*.

“ Sure I’ll keep them fur ye.”

“ Do what you will, nurse ; but, remember, though I can, and may have to bear much, I could not support the idea of your wanting any

thing. One kiss before I go down. How I wish Georgy would let you come with me to Bayswater, and stay at home herself."

"She hasn't so much since—though I'm sorry for her, she's in great trouble entirely about you going away—faith I begin to make it out."

Lady Desmond was, as Mrs. O'Toole said, in great trouble, restless, miserable, capricious ; at one moment pressing Kate to change her plans, and accompany her to Ireland, at another, evidently ready to facilitate her departure, while she hurried her own preparations, yet showed a disposition to linger within the charmed precincts where echo sometimes conveyed a rumour of Lord Effingham's proceedings.

He was still at Cowes, and the *Morning Post* of that day gave an account of a dinner given by him on board his new yacht, "The Meteor," to all the celebrities of the R. Y. C.

"That does lot look like disappointment,"

thought Lady Desmond, as she read, ' time, and time only can satisfy me of the truth."

She was silent during the repast, of which Kate strove to partake, and rose at once, on Miss Vernon suggesting that she had promised to be with Mrs. Storey at two.

Nurse made her appearance as the cousins descended to the carriage.

"Once more good-bye, kindest and best," said Kate, embracing her, and trying to speak steadily. "Georgy," she continued, laying her hand impressively on Lady Desmond's arm, "I know you love nurse for her own sake. But, remember, I feel every kindness shown to her as intended for myself."

"You may trust nurse safely to me," replied her cousin; and they entered the carriage.

Kate leaned from it as long as nurse remained in sight, and often, in after days, declared that the long earnest gaze, with which she followed the retreating form so dear to her, impressed itself for ever on her heart, and that

nurse's figure, in her black dress and white cap, as she stood shading her eyes with her hand, formed one of those indelible pictures ever vivid, let unnumbered years roll by, with which memory is at rare intervals stamped.

Lady Desmond preserved an almost unbroken silence until they neared their destination, and had reached the comparatively quiet region of the parks, then turning to Kate, said—

“I suppose Mrs. Storey will not expect me to go in. I am in no humour for her gossip.”

“Of course you need not if you do not like it; but—”

“Oh, then I see I ought—yes, it will be more gracious. I would do anything to serve or please you, my Kate,” and she looked at her mournfully and tenderly.

Miss Vernon's eyes filled with tears; yet they were not unhappy tears. She was thank-

ful to bid her cousin adieu in this mood—for Kate set a great value on last impressions.

The sound of the carriage-wheels brought a rosy-cheeked, smiling parlor-maid to the hall-door, while a row of small heads appeared above the parlor blinds. Then ensued the lively bustle of lifting down trunks, and carrying in carpet-bags ; and the rosy parlor-maid ran backwards and forwards, her little airy cap blown about by the light breeze, quite in a twitter at being assisted, with much gallantry, by so distinguished an individual as Lady Desmond's footman.

“I am sure this is so kind of you, Lady Desmond ; I did not expect the pleasure of seeing of you. Miss Vernon, my dear, you are most heartily welcome ; the children have been looking out for you all day—my little Willie has not forgotten you. You'll take some cake and wine—do ?”

“Thank you, no,” said Lady Desmond. “We have lunched ; and I only gave myself

a few moments, in which to say, how do you do, and good-bye. I start to-morrow for Ireland, and have much to accomplish before dinner-time."

"Well, but you will sit down, and let me thank you for leaving Miss Vernon with us awhile. My dear," to Kate, "you are not looking so well—paler and thinner than when I saw you last—I am sure the air at Hampton Court is beautiful and healthy. I never enjoyed anything so much as the day I spent with your ladyship. I see my Lord Effingham is in the Isle of Wight. I never met so nice a man as he is, and as simple as a common person. I thought," again turning to Kate, "you would not like to leave England somehow or other," and she laughed a significant laugh that raised the blood in quick nervous blushes to Kate's cheek; she glanced at Lady Desmond; but her brow was not more overcast than before, and the entrance of the children prevented any further remark.

The eldest boy—a fair-haired, bright-eyed child, just old enough to be shy—stood awhile, his finger in his mouth, half hiding behind his nurse-maid's apron, till Kate stretched out her arms. When, after a moment's hesitation, he bounded into them, and they were as great friends as ever.

“Now that I have installed Kate in the bosom of your family, Mrs. Storey, I must say good-bye,” said Lady Desmond, rising.

Kate put down little Willie, and stood up with a beating heart.

“You will let me know immediately how you get over, and make nurse write—give her my fond love, Georgy.”

“I will,” said her cousin, who had taken a very gracious leave of Mrs. Storey. She paused a moment, and, then folding her arms round Kate, kissed her with all her old accustomed warmth, whispering—“Trust me still!” and rapidly descending the stairs, was out of sight.

before Kate could realise that she was really going.

Miss Vernon turned from the window with a chooking sensation in her throat ; the time was indeed come when she must struggle on alone.

“ So you are very glad to see Miss Vernon again, Willie ? ” asked the proud mama, stroking his curls.

“ Yes,” lisped Willie, pressing his little round cheek against Kate’s hand, and looking up in her face with such a bright loving glance, that she felt irresistibly cheered by it.

“ Not more glad than I am to see Willie.”

She sat down, and took him into her lap.

“ We do not dine till six to-day,” said Mrs. Storey ; “ you are accustomed to late hours, and my brother said he would join us—you are such a favorite with him.”

“ You must not change your hours for me,” returned Kate, “ I know you generally dine with the children, and I like dining early.”

“You are very good and obliging, I am sure. You see, Mr. Storey is so late generally—but to-day he said he would make it a point to be home early; he is so pleased you are to be with us.”

“I am very glad to hear it,” said Kate, gratified at this cordiality.

“And I expect to hear lots of news,” resumed Mrs. Storey, significantly.

“Indeed, I have none to tell,” said Kate.

“Well, well, we shall see. And how do you think the children looking? Willie has had a sore throat—we were afraid it might end in scarletina, &c., &c.”

And the good-natured gossip was merged in the anxious mother, who, encouraged by Kate’s ready attention, poured forth a string of anecdotes, maternal and domestic, touching “baby’s last tooth,” and “Maria’s shameful neglect of her plate and glass.”

And Miss Vernon felt a sense of relief in hearing these natural, simple details, which she

usually voted extremely tiresome; but now, after the agitations she had passed through, and the stormy passions she had witnessed, anything indicative of home, with its calm atmosphere of repose, and quiet duty, was refreshing to her.

So instinctively conscious of more than usual sympathy in her listener, Mrs. Storey chattered on uninterruptedly until it was almost time to dress for dinner.

Miss Vernon missed her affectionate motherly attendant as she arranged her unpretending toilette for dinner. Not that she was incapable of waiting on herself; but her dressing-room had always been the scene of those confidential conversations in which Mrs. O'Toole's soul delighted. She pictured to herself her loving and beloved nurse sitting alone in some room of the busy, crowded hotel, her arms folded in her apron, rocking herself to and fro, with no one near to whom she could speak in the genuine accents of real sorrow.

“My poor dear nurse, may God comfort you,” murmured Kate; and then, feeling her fortitude melting away before the picture she had conjured up, she resolutely turned from it. “I have no right to damp the spirits of these friendly people with my melancholy looks.”

So she braided her bright hair, and smiled at her pale checks, which had lost the few roses they began to gather at Hampton Court: and hearing some one trying to turn the handle of the door, opened it, and admitted little Willie, with whom she descended to the drawing-room.

“Well, indeed, my dear, you do not look so rosy or so bright as I would wish to see you,” said Mrs. Storey, “not but that you look pretty always.”

“*Cela va sans dire,*” interrupted Kate, smiling.

“But,” resumed Mrs. Storey, “what is the reason his lordship is gone to the Isle of Wight?”

“ Will you believe me,” replied Kate, gravely and impressively, “ when I assure you that I am equally ignorant of, and unaccountable for, Lord Effingham’s movements.

The gravity of her manner silenced her loquacious hostess, and immediately after Mr. Storey entered, accompanied by Langley. The former greeted Kate with boisterous cordiality, the latter with sincere though quiet pleasure. It was an additional trial to her, this meeting with Langley, whom she had not seen since her grandfather’s death ; and the contending memories which his presence recalled kept her silent, while he expressed, in his usual shy, embarrassed manner, his happiness in meeting her again. He was very taciturn at dinner, but this passed unnoticed, as the host and hostess were really a host in themselves, at least in the talking line.

“ I have to thank you for sending me Mr. Winter’s letters so promptly,” said Kate, as

they sat near each other at tea. “I am very anxious for another, but do not know where to write ;—and, Mr. Langley, why did you never come to see me all the time I was at Hampton Court ?”

Langley coloured.

“I do not know Lady Desmond,” he said, “and you were all too fine and gay for an obscure artist.”

“Gay,” repeated Kate, looking at him reproachfully.

“Well, too fine ; I should not have felt at home there.”

“I should have been much pleased had you taken the trouble to pay me a visit, and Hampton Court would have delighted you ; but, of course, you know it already.”

“Yes, I——” began Langley, again reddening, then interrupting himself abruptly—“If I really thought you remembered, I was—that is, I did not think you would notice it.”

“Ah! Mr. Langley,” said Kate, with a pensive smile, “you feel guilty, or you would not hesitate so much.”

“Had you there, Bill,” cried Mr. Storey, with an agreeable wink; “the ladies are never merciful when they catch us tripping.” But Langley deigned no reply.

“I do not think Winter is inclined to come back,” said he to Kate; “he wrote me a few lines enclosing his last letter to you, in which he says he should like to remain where he is until he had drawn the whole country, natural and architectural, but that Mrs. Winter’s absurd prejudices against grease and fleas would, he feared, cut short his enjoyment.”

“My dear William,” cried his sister, raising her hands and eyes to heaven, “what *will* Miss Vernon think of you mentioning such dreadful low vulgar words. I am sure I am thankful Lady Desmonds not here—what would she say?”

“I dare say her ladyship is aware that

such an entomological variety exists," returned Langley, drily.

"Have you been very busy this summer," asked Kate, changing the subject in compassion to her hostess.

"Yes, no—that is, I have been busily idle."

"Sketching, and not finishing," suggested Miss Vernon. "That was what Mr. Winter used to call busy idleness."

"You and Miss Vernon must look at my studio some day," said Langley to his sister; "I have one or two pretty subjects in progress."

"I shall be delighted," cried Kate. "I am always happy in a studio, more so than even in a perfect gallery; besides, a studio always reminds me of Mr. Winter," she added with such enthusiasm that her listeners smiled.

"I suppose you used to visit the pictures at Hampton Court frequently?"

"Yes, yet not as often as I intended—something always happened to interfere with our

visits—and I am so fond of Vandyke : his men and women are so noble-looking, one can hardly associate them with the wretched period in which they lived ; but I suppose his paintings picture his own mind rather than the individuals he meant to depict."

" Well, I would rather pay for my own portrait than another person's," said Mr. Storey ; " and I think Smith has hit off both myself and Mrs. S. right well."

" Your pictures are certainly very like," said Miss Vernon politely.

" But the most unmitigated daubs," remarked Langley.

" I never enjoyed any pictures so much as those at Hampton Court," remarked Mrs. Storey. " But then Lord Effingham told me about them so nicely ; he knew them all."

" Lord Effingham—a distinguished cicerone, Charlotte," remarked her brother. " He was very well known in the London world some five or six years ago, though one never heard

much good of him—has he not been abroad for a long time?"

This question was addressed to Miss Vernon, in total disregard of Mrs. Storey's energetic hems and warning frowns when he spoke disparagingly of the earl.

"He was for some time in Italy—my cousin knew him there," replied Kate.

"I'm sure he seemed the quietest and most obliging man I ever met," said Mrs. Storey eagerly; "and it is just envy because he is richer and grander than themselves, that makes people tell ill-natured stories of him."

"I do not fancy Lord Effingham is an amiable man," said Kate, quietly; "I do not think I ever saw him do the agreeable so readily as the day you were with us."

"Hum," said Langley, gravely. "Then it was you, Charlotte, that kept his lordship on his P's and Q's.

"Now, Miss Vernon, may we ask you for a little music?"

“Not this evening, dear Mrs. Storey,” said Kate, deprecatingly, and shaking her head. “To-morrow as much as you like, but to-night I feel quite unmusical.”

“Well, I dare say you feel low at parting with Lady Desmond,” said Mrs. Storey.

“And nurse,” added Kate.

So the evening wore away, and at last Kate was free to retire to the grateful solitude of her own room, to gather comfort and support from “communing with her own heart,” and finally to rest.

The day at Mrs. Storey’s was very tranquil and rather monotonous. The eight o’clock breakfast was quickly followed by the departure of Mr. Storey for the city, and the eldest girl to school. Kate volunteered the task of inspecting Masters Willie and Bobby at their studies, thereby affording another hour to their mamma for the dear delight of the kitchen and the store-room. Kate saw little of

her hostess before the one o'clock dinner, until which time she pursued her practising or her reading, her work or her thoughts uninterrupted.

Mr. Storey never returned to tea until seven o'clock, when he was usually ravenous and inaudible until after the consumption of divers viands. He often brought home some dapper city friend, with an evident wish to make his house agreeable to Miss Vernon, and under the usual impression entertained by men of his stamp, that beaux are a necessary of life to young ladies. This was the only real drawback in Kate's estimation to her *séjour* at "Raby Villas"—the euphonious appellation of Mr. Storey's abode.

Mrs. Storey too meditated a party—for, with all her good nature, Kate was a much more important personage in her estimation, fresh from the society of earls and countesses—the *crème de la crème*—than when she walked almost daily over to Brompton, with no

attendant save a great dog, and received three and sixpence a lesson for music.

The letters for which Kate had looked so anxiously were as usual in cases of anticipation, disappointing and perplexing ; they did not arrive till the day after that on which they might have reached ; Lady Desmond's ran thus :—

“ DEAR KATE,

“ Though peculiarly averse to writing, I feel I must keep my promise to you. We had a tiresome journey and a rough passage, but except fatigue, I am well enough ; nurse who has had red eyes ever since she bid you good bye, desires her love and duty, and says she will not write this time ; she has just been sitting with me ; I was consoling her, at least trying to do so. This place looks wretched and deserted, worse than when I was last here. They say every one is ruined ; I wonder I am not ; but I can write no more, my head and heart are both

aching. You shall hear from me when I reach Castle Desmond,"

"Yours miserably,  
"G. D."

At the bottom were some words across which a few had been hastily drawn once or twice. Kate easily perceived they were the commencement of a sentence, "your readiness to," but some interruption mental or physical had cut short the fair scribe, and she had changed her intentions.

To Kate's infinite surprise, for Mrs. O'Toole was in general a remarkably straightforward person, a second letter reached her by the mid-day mail, directed in a blotted irregular hand written apparently with a wooden skewer.

*"To Miss Vernon at Mr. Storey's,  
Bayswater."*

"Mee own blessed child," it began, "do'nt let on a word of this to mortal man; you will be

angry with me for decavin me lady, but I wanted to write unknown'st, and I'm quite and snug for the night now, so I thought I'd sthrive to pen ye a line without a word to any one ; the morning we left London, Saturday, Miss Lewis hears tell how me Lord Effingham was coming to take the rooms we wor in next week, and she ups and tould me lady, and me lady sends for me. 'Nurse, says she, lookin like a ghost and her two eyes blazin mad, 'Wor you aware' says she spakin low, 'that Lord Effingham was commin, 'To be sure I was ; says I, 'I heerd it as well as Miss Lewis,' says I, and then she turned and bit her lips, and looked like tunther, "I thought you might have heard it at Hampton Coort," ses she. 'Divil a haporth good nor bad I heard tell of him at the Coort,' says I ; with that she gave a sort of a groan, 'Very well,' says she, 'of course, what could you know about him ! What's delayin us,' ses she mighty sharp, 'the carriage immediately Roberts,' ses she, and there was no mistake she was in

airnest. Now she's been quere since then, mighty fond of me, an always talkin of you, me darlint, butsome how there's no truth in her eyes, so jist mind how ye write, an sure me eyes an me hands is tired, an if ye can read it, do'nt be angry if I write too free; sure I'd brave even the cross word from yourself, if I could do ye good, me own darlin child, there's not an hour of the day your poor old nurse does'nt be prayin for you, so God shield ye, and send me the light of me eyes again safe and sound.

“Your own loving and respectful nurse,  
“NELLY O'TOOLE.”

Miss Vernon sat for some time lost in perplexed thought, she was truly glad to get nurse's affectionate letter, yet wished she had not told her that Lord Effingham was in town.

“I must not betray nurse, and yet I should very much like to write openly to Georgy, her suspicions are once more all alive,” and the indignant colour rose to Kate's cheek at the idea

of such pertinacious injustice. "I must write as if regardless of any change in her tone since we last met, I wish dear nurse had not mentioned Lord Effingham, I wish I never had heard his name."

Rousing herself from these fruitless reflections she called Willie, and knowing of old what potent consolers fresh air and sunshine always proved, asked Mrs. Storey's leave to take him with her to Kensall-green Cemetery where her grandfather's remains had been interred. She had not yet visited his grave, and choose the child's companionship during that visit of tender duty, as more congenial than any other. Willie, dancing with joy at the delight in prospect of a walk with Miss Vernon, was soon equipped, and the two friends started lovingly hand in hand.

Their way lay through pleasant fields with a pretty back-ground of wooded country towards Harrow, all glowing in the rich light of an Autumn sun. Kate was quite inattentive to

the pretty talk of her little squire. She was was traversing these fields again with a far different companion, she was living over again many autumns all distinctly marked in her faithful memory ; it had always been the gayest time at Dungar, it had been the brightest period of her sojourn at A——, dear A, which she found usurping the place Dungar had formerly held in her heart. And last autumn though clouded, was not all gloom ; she had then that beloved grandfather, the nucleus round which, all her deepest affections, her noblest energies, her most unfaltering fortitude had ever rallied, rich in their undying truth. She recalled with the distinctness of unchanging affection, the incidents, trifling though they were, which marked the last days of his life ; the gradual progress of a dejection she could not cheer ; the quiet resignation of earthly hopes ; the silent, the gentleness, the child-like simplicity of the noble spirit with which she had intimately communed during her whole life. Oh how vividly it all

came back to her ; the placid smile so sad in its sweetness ; the thoughtfulness for others so marked in his last illness ; and it was all over ; never more on earth should she behold him.

Roused at length from her thoughts by the unwonted silence of poor little Willie who was discouraged by receiving no answer to his many questions, she pressed the hand she held kindly and asked—"does Willie know the way to my dear grandfather's grave?"

"Oh yes" cried the child eagerly, proud to be her guide, "Maria used often to take us there in the summer evenings, and mama sometimes, we used to see that the flowers were taken care of, it is such a pleasant walk."

"Do you remember grandpapa" oppressed with the silent anguish of her own heart.

"I think I do" returned Willie, "He had such beautiful white hair, and sugar plums always in his pocket."

Kate smiled, though her tears fell upon the

little hand that lay in hers, as she recognised this picture.

“Why do you cry, dear Kate?” asked Willie who was a loving creature, “you are never naughty.”

“I cry,” returned Kate, “because I have not that dear grandpapa to walk with me or to love me any more.” The child seemed baffled by misfortune so far beyond his comprehension, but soon renewed the conversation by one of those innocent questions of the state of the souls after death, which children propound almost as soon as they are capable of observing.

“There it is—there it is”—he at length cried bounding forward to the head of a grave, separated from the turf around, by a couple of iron bars supported by small pillars of the same metal; some heartsease and laurels adorned the little enclosure; and at the head a block of marble carved to represent a gothic niche, and surmounted by the armorial bearings of the deceased, bore the following inscription:—

SACRED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
COLONEL D'ARCY VERNON,  
OF DUNGAR,  
JUST, GENEROUS, BRAVE, AND TRUE.  
THIS STONE IS ERECTED BY A MOURNING RELATIVE,  
ONE OF THE MANY WHO OWE HIM AN  
UNREQUITABLE DEBT OF GRATITUDE.

This simple, noble epitaph touched and gratified Miss Vernon's inmost soul. Simply and fervently she raised her soul to Heaven in silent prayer ; and, at last, soothed and calmed by the just tribute so gracefully paid to the departed, she called to Willie, who (soon wearied of her motionless attitude) had wandered away.

“ I can never feel a shadow of anger against Georgy again for anything,” she thought, as her eye took in all the advantages of the well-

chosen site—it was in the highest part of the cemetery ; far below, lay the mighty town, looming indistinct through the cloud and smoke that shrouded it, like life with its trials, mean and great all hidden, in their tendencies, by the mist of human vision—while around and beyond was the clear blue sky, the balmy air, and the song of the birds, like the region of pure joy, and undimmed faith, to which the wearied spirit had escaped.

\*       \*       \*       \*

“ Please ‘m, there’s a gentleman waiting to see you in the drawing-room,” said the spruce Maria, one evening about a week after, when Kate and Mrs. Storey returned from a round of visits, into which the former had been entrapped.

“ Indeed,” said Kate, then suddenly recollecting herself, “ I dare say it is Colonel Dashwood.”

“Well, my dear, I will go and take off my bonnet, and, by that time, you will have finished your secrets.”

“I am sure Colonel Dashwood never had a secret in his life,” said Kate, laughing.

She ran hastily up stairs, and found, as she had anticipated, that gallant officer engaged in contemplating sundry long ringleted ladies in a book of beauty, having reduced the geometrical arrangement of the round table albums and annuals to great confusion.

“I was just about to give you up in despair,” cried Colonel Dashwood, advancing to meet her with great cordiality. “Any commands for Dublin? I start to-morrow.”

“For Dublin!” said Kate. “You astonish me. How—what is it takes you away so suddenly?” And she looked earnestly at his countenance, which wore a bright, hopeful expression, far different from the last she had seen there.

“ Hampton Court has been insupportable since your departure,” said the Colonel, gaily, “ so I have got three weeks’ leave ; and, after some uncertainty how to dispose of myself, decided on visiting my old haunts in Ireland.”

“ I am sorry you will just miss Georgina,” observed Miss Vernon. “ She has either left Dublin for Castle Desmond, or will to-morrow.”

“ Indeed,” cried Colonel Dashwood, evidently pulled up by this piece of information. “ I was speaking to Effingham, who put me down here, and he seemed to think she would remain there some short time.”

“ It was pure fancy on Lord Effingham’s part,” returned Kate, “ he is quite ignorant of her movements.”

“ So it appears ; yet they said at Hampton Court that this sudden move was merely a preparatory step to changing Lady Desmond into the Countess of Effingham.”

“ How absurd,” cried Kate, coloring, “ there never was the least probability of such a *finale* to their acquaintance.”

“ I discovered as much from Effingham’s conversation this morning,” said the Colonel, significantly, “ though,” he added, laughingly, ‘ I confess, notwithstanding some experience on these points, my observation was quite at fault as to his object in---but,” interrupting himself, “ I am growing terribly indiscreet, Miss Vernon. Effingham was sorry some engagement, I do not know what, prevented him from calling upon you to-day—and I strongly advised him to defer that pleasure.”

“ I do not wish to see Lord Effingham,” said Kate, gravely.

The Colonel raised his eye-brows, and smiled.

“ Tell me, if I miss Lady Desmond in Dublin, how shall I get on her track? Is there any shooting or fishing in the neighbourhood—is Castle Desmond beyond the reach of Bianconi’s cars?—for, if I remember rightly, they are

the most extended ramifications of civilisation in your splendid country."

The entrance of Mrs. Storey cut short his enquiries.

"Colonel Dashwood, Mrs. Storey," said Kate, "you remember Colonel Dashwood perhaps."

"Oh, quite well," replied Mrs. Storey, with one or two little bobbing curtseys, as she took the chair handed her by that polite individual. "I am very sorry Mr. Storey is not at home, and we might, perhaps, induce the Colonel to stop dinner with us."

"A thousand thanks, my dear madam; but I must dine with the Guards to-day, and only ran down here to ask Miss Vernon's commands for Ireland."

"Oh, indeed! I did not know you were Irish."

"Nor am I; but I like good fishing, and plenty of fun, and both are to be had in Paddy's land."

“I fear you will not find much of the last now,” said Kate.

“What a pity the Colonel is running away before the 30th,” said Mrs. Storey. “We have a few friends and a little music, and, perhaps, you would have joined us,” continued the hospitable little woman, who thought how much Colonel’s Dashwood’s fine figure and *air distingué* would astonish the Bayswater world.

“You had better stay,” suggested Kate.

“Ah! unfortunately, it is not in my power.”

“Were you at the Countess of B——’s grand ball on Friday night, Colonel Dashwood?” asked Mrs. Storey, anxious to get up a little fashionable talk, and to show her knowledge of the great world.

“Lady B——, no! did she give a ball? I remember her—she is an awful old woman. I never go to balls in London—they are such tame correct things—country quarters spoil one for your regular dazzling scenes.”

Kate could not refrain from a smile at the amazement depicted on Mrs. Storey's countenance at this sally.

“ Talking of balls,” resumed Colonel Dashwood, “ reminds me of an indefatigable dancer, at least, in former years: Fred Egerton; I had a letter the other day, from him; he does not seem to have got mine, when he wrote. The mail is extremely irregular, during all this skirmishing—he appears to be suffering from some neglected wound, and is fretting at his inactivity—he used to be the easiest going fellow on earth; but Sir John M—— was telling me the other day, that they hold him to be one of the smartest officers on our Indian establishment, at present—he is a capital fellow, at all events. By-the-bye, he asks where you and the —.” Dashwood stopped short; “ I mean my late friend, Colonel Vernon, are which shows he had not received any letters or papers for an immense time.”

Kate silently reclined her head, and after

exchanging a few more remarks with Mrs. Storey, Colonel Dashwood took his leave, promising, with great earnestness, that should anything occur to delay his departure, he would, without fail, make his appearance among the “expected few friends,” on the 30th.

“Good-bye, Miss Vernon,” said he, pressing her hand kindly ; “thanks for your *carte du pays* ; take care of yourself, for I cannot give a very flourishing account of you to Lady Desmond ; there is more of the *beauté fragile* in your appearance, than I like to see. When do you join your cousin ?”

“Oh do not talk of that, Colonel Dashwood,” interrupted Mrs. Storey. “We cannot part with Miss Vernon for a long time to come.”

Kate only smiled.

“I wish you all success in your fishing ; only remember the grand characteristic of your craft is patience.”

The Colonel bowed, and was gone.

“What a nice man he is to be sure,” cried Mrs. Storey, as soon as they were *tete-à-tête* ; “so full of life, but quite different from Lord Effingham. Those gentleman in the army have such a gay, off-hand manner.”

“Yes, Colonel Dashwood is very much to be liked—I am very fond of him.”

“Lord, my dear, that is a confession.”

“Is it,” said Kate, laughing.

“What would my lord say to that?” asked Mrs. Storey.

“Nothing, I should think.”

“Two strings to one’s bow, are sometimes as bad as none,” remarked Mrs. Storey, oracularly.

“Between two stools, etc., is that your meaning?” asked Kate, carelessly. “I must take off my bonnet and shawl and finish the discussion at tea.”

Miss Vernon was glad to have seen Colonel Dashwood, and heard from him, of Lord

Effingham's presence in London ; she could now, if necessary, mention it to Lady Desmond, without betraying nurse — but she trusted it would not be necessary, for his disinclination to accompany Colonel Dashwood in his visit, had led her to hope he had accepted her dismissal as final, and already begun to forget his *engouement*. She was glad too, that Colonel Dashwood was about to follow her cousin—such a mark of decided preference from a man, so deservedly esteemed as the Colonel, might, she thought, soothe her cousin's mortified spirit ; and, perhaps, supply her with a real and substantial object of affection, as she woke from the vain dream, that had proved so bitterly deceitful. “ I have heard dear grandpapa say, hearts were sometimes caught in the rebound.”

And Fred Egerton—she had of late thought it strange that he had taken no notice whatever of her sad bereavement—she thought he would have written, at least, to Winter, for

some particulars of the event ; but, resolutely turning from these thoughts, she fixed her mind on the probable reasons, why she had not received a second letter from Lady Desmond ; and finding her imagination less inclined to traverse the narrow breadth of the Irish channel, than to devour the wide space of the Overland route to India—she quitted the “phantom-peopled” solitude of her chamber, and joined the children in a game of “blind-man’s buff.” Mrs. Storey was grievously disappointed when, day after day rolled by, and Miss Vernon, not only never poured any tender revelation into her sympathising bosom, but never hinted that there was one to make. Mrs. Storey was accustomed to give advice in a number of difficult engagements, and a young lady, who was not provided with a lover, or on the look out for one, was a phenomenon uninteresting to her. Kate was so unmistakeably true, that she could not accuse her of the “depth,” to which discreet,

and sympathising matrons peculiarly object—so she had nothing for it, but to conclude Miss Vernon was too Blue to fall in love. This compulsory forbearance was, however, amply rewarded.

The day but one after Colonel Dashwood's visit, Kate received a letter from Lady Desmond—she wrote in rather better spirits, still dated from Dublin—she said she had postponed her departure another week, and that she feared very much the state of things about the Castle, was very deplorable, as the famine was most severe in that part of the world. The tone of the letter was more affectionate, yet there was something of constraint in it, that jarred upon Kate's feelings painfully; “But,” she thought, “I will be patient—poor Georgy! she has suffered so much.”

After their early dinner, Miss Vernon sat down to reply to her cousin's letter, and tell her of Colonel Dashwood's visit, intending to mention that Lord Effingham was in town

Mrs. Storey was busy over a large work-basket filled with small garments, of various sizes ; and both the children, Charlotte, and William, were playing about the room, often interrupting the progress of Kate's pen, while occasional communications from the scene of action up stairs, where the drawing-room was undergoing its weekly purification, disturbed the labours of Mrs. Storey's needle. They were all assembled in a small, plainly furnished parlour, used as a common sitting-room.

“ Go and look out of the window, like good children, and let Miss Vernon write in peace,” said mama, at last, and Kate continued to write for some moments uninterrupted.

“ What a beautiful horse,” cried Willie, after looking over the blinds for a while in silence.

“ How he holds up his head,” said his sister ; “ and the boy in the pretty little boots is looking at all the houses.”

“They are coming here,” shouted Willie, clapping his hands.

Mrs. Storey rose to look, and reached the window, just as the diminutive tiger knocked at the door.

“Law, my dear Miss Vernon, this is some friend of yours; what a stylish cab,” exclaimed Mrs. Storey, now quite as much absorbed in contemplating the new arrival, as her children. “The boy has taken the reins, and—my gracious, if it is’nt Lord Effingham himself, and all the furniture out of the drawing-room; and my work basket! was there ever anything half so unlucky,” and she rushed in helpless perplexity to hide, at least, the unsightly work-basket from view, when the door was thrown open, and the spruce maid, looking unusually dusty, hastily announced—

“A gentleman for Miss Vernon.”

Kate, whose sense of the ridiculous, was too genuine to be extinguished, even by sincere vexation at so unwelcome a visit, rose to re-

ceive him with an irrepressible smile, at the contrast between Mrs. Storey's despairing fuss, and his calm, unconscious, high-bred *entré*.

Lord Effingham evidently mistook the source of that smile, for he responded to it with a sudden clearing of his clouded brow, and brightening of the eye.

"I began to fear I should never see you again, Miss Vernon," was his opening address. "I drove Dashwood down here a couple of days ago; but, in compassion to his evident wish to get rid of me, with praiseworthy self-denial, I left him to his own devices; and to-day I find he went to the wrong house; and I have been some time looking for the right one—all's well that end's well, however;" and he bowed, a bow of recognition to Mrs. Storey.

Kate felt singularly puzzled how to treat him; it was impossible not to accept his easy polished manner, and matter-of-course address, in the same unembarrassed style; yet it pro-

voked her to find him thus establishing himself on precisely his former footing, while she felt herself powerless to prevent it. She strove by monosyllabic answers, and the utmost coldness, to convey her distaste for his visits ; but if repulsed by Miss Vernon, he was eminently successful in charming her hostess. He alluded once or twice to their pictorial expedition at Hampton Court, and asked if the famous painter, Langley, was not a relative of hers. Mrs. Storey eagerly explained the degree of consanguinity ; and Kate heard, with no small astonishment, a visit to his studio, speedily arranged.

“ What an amount of annoyance Lord Effingham must be enduring,” she thought ; for poor Mrs. Storey exactly represented a class of persons, held in devout horror by the fastidious Earl ; it only required a few caresses to the children to complete Miss Vernon’s amazement ; but he did not get quite so far.

“ You have not told me anything of Lady

Desmond," said Lord Effingham, turning to her with consummate assurance. "She is in Dublin, is she not?"

Kate bowed.

"And Miss Vernon had a letter from her to-day," added Mrs. Storey, rather scandalised by Kate's coldness. "I believe she is quite well."

"So nurse says," replied Miss Vernon.

"That is one of the most remarkable women I have ever met," observed Lord Effingham, in precisely the same tone of dignified approbation he would have used towards a crowned head.

Mrs. Storey laughed, and said, "she was quite a character."

The conversation lagged after this; and the impatient Earl began to weary of the unwonted exercise of so much self-control; he was, however, determined to make Miss Vernon speak.

"You cannot imagine my astonishment, on

my return from Cowes, to find you had flown," he said; "Lady Desmond's movements are as sudden and as well masked as Napoleon's."

"It can hardly be called a masked movement, considering it had been discussed a fortnight before *en cour pleniere*," returned Miss Vernon; "some intelligence, unexpectedly, received, induced my cousin to make the journey more suddenly than she had anticipated."

"I expected as much," said Lord Effingham, with quiet significance, the insolence of which, perceptible to her only, called the indignant blood into Kate's cheek. "But," he continued, looking steadily at her, "some fairy, or angel whispered to me that you would not accompany her, although I am not in the habit of receiving angelic communications."

"There are two descriptions of angels," said Kate, simply.

The remark was irresistible; but it was hardly uttered before she regretted it; for

Lord Effingham smiled, gaily, as if gratified that she had deigned to retort. He was now satisfied he had accomplished as much as one visit would permit, and rising to depart, thanked Mrs. Storey for her permission to accompany them to Langley's studio, and made his adieux with the same ease that marked his *entrée*.

"Well, my dear," cried Mrs. Storey, triumphantly, "you will believe me again! I think there is no mistake about that. And how you could treat such an elegant man with the greatest coldness, I cannot understand. Had you any quarrel with him? for you were friendly enough at Hampton Court."

"I have no quarrel with Lord Effingham, Mrs. Storey," replied Kate, gravely; "but I dislike him extremely; and I must ask you, as a favour, that you will not encourage him to come here. It is very natural that you should think well of him. I know him better."

"Law! my dear girl," said Mrs. Storey,

eagerly. “Don’t be foolish! Earls are not to be found on every bush. And what is it to you if he has been a little wild; young men will be young men; and when he is married, he will turn over a new leaf. See, how independent and grand you would be as Countess of Effingham, going down to dinner before Lady Desmond herself.”

“I know, my dear Mrs. Storey, how well-meant is your advice; and, believe me, I am grateful for the interest you take in my prospects; but do not refuse my request; help me to avoid Lord Effingham.”

“But what shall we do about to-morrow?” said poor Mrs. Storey, ruefully. She could not relinquish an Earl without a pang.

“I am sure Mr. Langley will raise some obstacle. At all events, I will remain in my own room, and you can act as his *cicerone*. If this continues,” added Kate, resolutely, “I will leave London. Indeed, I have wished to speak to you on this subject before.”

“I am sure I shall never forgive Lord Effingham if he frightens you away, my dear,” said Mrs. Storey, kindly ; and then added, reflectively—“goodness me ! how strange high-life is !”

This visit of Lord Effingham’s was a great shock to Kate ; how was she to clear herself in Lady Desmond’s eyes from the suspicion that she had consented so readily to remain in London in order to see her accepted lover more frequently. Yes ! the only remedy was to mature her crude plans for endeavouring to obtain employment of some kind out of London—to dependance she would never return.

Kate’s anticipations as to Langley’s raising obstacles to that visit proved correct ; he made his appearance, according to his usual custom, at tea time.

“Lord Effingham was here this morning, William—he is very anxious to see your studio ; and I promised to take him with me to-morrow.”

"He does me infinite honour," said Langley. "But it happens I am going to Windsor to-morrow, and cannot leave my studio unlocked even to gratify his lordship."

Kate thought he said this with unusual acerbity.

"Well, that *is* unfortunate," cried Mrs. Storey.

"What a *grandee* you are growing all at once, Charlotte," said her husband, facetiously; "patronising Earls and Colonels—they will want you at Almacks next. Talking of finery," continued Mr. Storey, "I was introduced to Tom Jorrocks' wife to-day, and promised you would call upon her—they are in town, for a few weeks, at ———; here's his card, Cambridge Terrace."

And Mr. and Mrs. Storey immediately plunged into the history of Tom Jorrocks and his wife, and of how rich his mother was, and what a large fortune he was making, &c., &c.

While Langley and Kate conversed quietly apart.

“Is Lord Effingham a great lover of painting?”

“I believe so ; he certainly understands it.”

“It is curious enough ; I was walking this evening with Gailliard, (who, by the way, was making many enquiries for you,) when Lord Effingham drove past us in Regent Street. Gailliard seems to have known a good deal of him abroad ; he gave a curious character of him.” Langley thought for some moments, and then resumed—“You remember Gail-liard ?”

“Oh, quite well—I should like to see him again.”

“He has just returned from France, with a perfect budget of anecdotes, touching the late Revolution ; he is a strange fellow,” concluded Langley, musingly.

“I always wonder that M. Gailliard is not a man of greater eminence than he is.”

“Yes—he has all the ingredients to be a great writer, a good artist, a leading character, and yet he seems to have missed everything.”

“Perhaps,” said Kate, smiling, “he requires the predominance of some one of these qualities to decide his character, as the slightly superior strength of the right hand prevents the awkwardness of not knowing which to use.”

“Very likely. Do you know, Miss Vernon, you think a good deal for a young lady!”

“I cannot accept so insulting a compliment,” said Kate, laughing; and rising, at Mrs. Storey’s request, she went to the piano. “I want your opinion of this air—it came back to me in a dream some nights ago. A poor silly boy at Dungar used to sing it so sweetly, and I have never heard it since. I rather think it is a very old air that escaped Moore and Sir John Stevenson—the Irish words I never knew; but these I found among poor

Mr. Gilpin's papers—they seem to have been written not long before his sister's death."

And, after a few arpeggio chords, she sung as follows:—

"Look afar thro' the gloom, weary heart,  
To yon dim and faint revealing,  
The glim'ring ray  
Of distant day  
O'er life's troubled ocean stealing.

It comes with endless joy, sad heart,  
A glorious sunburst beaming,  
With peace and love  
From heaven above,  
O'er sin and sorrow streaming.

Soon the dark waters past, sad heart,  
Thoult rest in thy spirit home,  
Where we part no more  
From those gone before  
Across life's billowy foam.

There no falsehood shall oppress thee,  
Nor sorrow's dark'ning gloom,  
For free is the soul  
That has reached its goal,  
In the world beyond the tomb."

"Well, Miss Vernon," remarked Mr. Storey, "that's quite too melancholy a song for me—the dismals never suit my book."

"My dear! it is beautiful, and made me cry, I could not help it!" exclaimed his wife.

"You say the words are original," observed Langley.

"Yes, I am almost sure they were written by Mr. Gilpin's sister, who died of consumption shortly before we went to A——."

"They suit the air remarkably—the song makes an impression I shall not easily forget nor your singing of it," added Langley, more to himself than to Kate.

"Now, Miss Vernon, may I ask for that march we liked so much, yesterday?" said

Mrs. Storey, and soon afterwards they separated for the night.

The next morning was most perseveringly wet, and both Mrs Storey and Kate agreed that the most determined picture-maniac would hardly venture out in such weather.

“But you will see, he will come for all that,” concluded Mrs. Storey.

“Then *you* must receive him,” said Kate, “I will not appear.”

“Gracious goodness,” cried her hostess. “What shall I say about you?”

“Do not trouble yourself to think—send for me, and the message I shall return will relieve you of all responsibility.”

“But if he insists on seeing you?”

“He dare not!” said Kate, with a sudden lighting of the eye, and proud drawing up of the head that seemed to her good easy friend like the revelation of some unknown world. “Well my dear, whatever you like,” she said, meekly.

Mrs. Storey's conjectures proved true, for, notwithstanding the weather, Lord Effingham arrived punctually at the time specified.

Kate felt her heart beat a little nervously, as she watched him walking across the garden, from the window of the nursery where she had ensconced herself.

In due course of time, Mrs. Storey's message reached her.

"Please'm, my missis says, would you be so good as to step down."

"My compliments, I am particularly engaged," said Miss Vernon, quietly.

And soon after, she heard the hall door open and shut, and the sound of retreating wheels informed her the enemy was in retreat. She found Mrs. Storey looking rather crest-fallen.

"Well, my dear, he is gone—in a very bad humour, I can tell you—he came in so politely, and asked if we still intended to go. So I told him about my brother being from home, he

did not seem to mind it much ; but said he hoped another time we should be more successful ; then he asked for you, and if you were at home, so I sent for you, and I assure my dear, I was beginning to feel quite nervous, for though he smiled and talked, he was looking very black, as if he was vexed at not seeing you. When Maria brought back your message, he turned and looked out of the window for a minute, then he said, with a very different kind of smile from what I saw before—‘ I should be sorry to interfere with Miss Vernon’s particular engagements, and as I am very likely interrupting your avocations, I shall bid you good morning.’ I told him I had nothing in the world to do at that hour of the day—but he did not seem to hear me speak, and with a sort of proud bow, he walked off ; and, my dear girl, I am sure you have mortally offended him ; but, for all that, I think he might have listened when I spoke to him.”

“Yes,” said Kate, “he was very rude, and we must both be out if he comes again, though I do hope and believe that was a mere threat.”

All remembrance of his Lordship’s impertinence was quickly obliterated from Mrs. Storey’s mind, by the rapidly increasing toils of preparation for “the thirtieth;” it was to be a quiet musical party—in consideration of Miss Vernon’s mourning—but very *recherché*. Mrs. Storey determined the supper should be what her husband termed a “chief endeavour,” the facetious translation of *chef d’œuvre*. ”

Kate waited till that all-absorbing event was over, and Mrs. Storey’s attention free, before she took her into her confidence, as regarded her future plans. She was now most anxious to do so. Employment, either as a resident governess, or a companion, was absolutely necessary. She could not remain much longer with Mrs. Storey, and to accept money or protection from Lady Desmond, while her suspicions remained as keenly alive as they

then were, was impossible. Her cousin's letters, though expressing a formal wish that she was happy and comfortable, had not, as yet, hinted at the future. And, however firmly Kate might trust to the mercy and guidance of an over-ruling Providence, the uncertainty of her prospects kept her in cruel suspense. If she could but only hear from Winter, and learn where to direct to him, all would be well. Then she would turn to Winter's last letter, and dwell upon the reality of its tone ; for, strange though it be, there is something so unerring in the instinct of truth, that mere written expressions, in all the barrenness of ink and paper, convey the real, or the unreal unmistakeably. Kate was always comforted by the perusal of the good little artist's characteristic epistles ; they placed him before her, in all the uncompromising sincerity she had tried, and never found wanting.

The day but one after her party, Mrs. Storey

disappointed Kate's intention of asking for a quiet confidential walk after dinner, by desiring the parlour maid at breakfast, to—

“Tell cook to have dinner at one precisely, I must go into town on particular business to-day.”

Kate declined her invitation to accompany her, observing—

“I want a long talk with you, dear Mrs. Storey, the first time you are at leisure.”

She received a ready assent to her proposition, from her curious hostess, who anticipated a clearing up of all the mysteries connected with Lord Effingham.

Kate had not long enjoyed the unwonted stillness of the house, after Mrs. Storey had departed for town, and the children for their afternoon walk, when her attention was aroused by the sound of voices in the hall, and the next moment Lord Effingham walked into the room. Miss Vernon started, and with difficulty suppressed the exclamation of sur-

prise which sprang to her lips. She rose from her seat, and stood silent, while her unwelcome visitor, advancing towards her, said, with the species of enforced quiet, which always indicated that emotion of some kind was struggling in his breast—

“I do not apologise for this intrusion, Miss Vernon, for you will, I know, forgive it, when I tell you how unconquerable is my desire to speak with you, alone. I have watched your amiable and intelligent hostess set out for town, and so made sure of some uninterrupted conversation—you must not refuse to hear me.”

“No, Lord Effingham,” said Miss Vernon, recovering her self-possession, “I, too, am almost glad, since you will not accept the tacit expression of my wishes, to have a decisive interview, we cannot continue on our present footing.”

“The extraordinary fact of your being domesticated with such people,” exclaimed Lord Effingham, abruptly, “is sufficiently elo-

quent of the terms on which you and your cousin parted—and I must know something more decisive from your own lips, before I resign all hopes of you. Speak ! Have you and your cousin separated in consequence of her insane pride—her absurd fancy about myself?"

"If I could convey the least idea to your mind," answered Kate, holding down her indignation, in order to speak with greater force, "of the repugnance with which I shrink from such expressions, you would not, I am sure, offend me by repeating them, Good Heavens," she continued, "what effect can you imagine must be produced upon one woman by such bold, such dishonorable assertions of another?"

"Dishonorable!" cried the Earl, his sallow cheek flushing for an instant. "You use strong terms, Miss Vernon."

"Not more strong than just,' returned Kate. "I call it dishonorable, if, rightly or

not, you conceive you have won a place in a woman's heart, to glance at the secret, even to your most intimate associate, much more to make it the subject of scornful remark to that woman's—”

She stopped, fearful of betraying herself or her cousin. Lord Effingham supplied the word—

“Rival you would have said, and you are right. I can well imagine the scorn, the bitterness with which she reproached you for all the crimes of art and dissimulation, of which *you* are so incapable. I can fancy the passionate, unappeaseable suspicions which drove you—here,” he added, after a moment’s pause to glance, with unutterable contempt, round the homely room in which they sat.

Kate felt that she quailed before the true picture he had sketched.

“Your eyes are less faithful to your cousin’s cause than your lips—*they* admit much,” continued Lord Effingham.

“ Then what I look I will speak,” returned Kate, with sudden boldness. “ Georgina, if she does care for you, is not a woman to give away her heart unasked. I have known and loved her all my life—that she is not indifferent to you, is, in my eyes, incontrovertible proof that you endeavoured to win her affections. It is no disgrace to a woman,” continued Kate, with encreasing boldness, “ to give the heart that seems so ardently sought. No ; the truer the purer—the nobler it is—the more incapable it is of conceiving the gratuitous treason that betrays it. I do not see why I should attempt to conceal the fact that I fear my cousin once loved you—with you rests the reproach ; but do you suppose that I am so unreal as to trust you—to believe that a passing admiration could so change your spirit, as to teach it sympathy with mine ? that your treachery to one woman would be a guarantee of good faith to another ? No, my Lord ! I am made of different stuff. Do not, for a moment, imagine it is in your

power to cause disunion between two such tried friends as my cousin and myself—we know each other's truth—we know it is worth too much to be lightly cast aside."

She paused; and Lord Effingham, whose varied colour had settled into deadly paleness, rose, and paced the room in silence, before replying—

" You are a stern judge, Miss Vernon," he said, at length, in the deep tone of concentrated anger. " I little thought the indulgence of a harmless whim would have been so severely visited upon me. Listen, fair and rigid exposer of my follies," he continued, sneeringly. " The secret of your just severity may be summed up thus—you do not love me; therefore, the conduct you so eloquently denounce, is unextenuated by the softening consideration that it was you—your own irresistible attractions—that made me a traitor. Your indifference, perhaps your pre-occupation, lends a magnifying power to your moral sense, and I

am condemned ; where —circumstances slightly changed—I might have been cherished. Enough ; I am satisfied there is no chance of my winning your affections. I will not, therefore, degrade myself for weary you with vain efforts.” He stopped opposite to her, silently for a minute, his arms folded, his eyes fixed on her face. “I wish to God I had known you long ago, Kate—that I had met you first. How is it, that with rank, and riches, and power here—” and he touched his forehead, “all rare gifts—I have so often missed the road to happiness.”

Kate, moved by the tone of despondency with which this was asked, replied hesitatingly—

“ Perhaps—because you never knew where to look for it.”

“ And will you not direct me ?” said the Earl, with intense earnestness.

Kate shook her head in silent refusal.

He gazed at her still for an instant, and then, taking her hand, said—

"In all probability, we shall never meet again. You have acted in accordance with your character—I, with mine."

And, turning away, he left the house.

Kate remained lost in thought without moving from the position in which she had heard Lord Effingham's parting words; she could hardly believe that he was really gone—that he would return no more; but stranger still, was the impression of regret and compassion he had left upon her mind. Surely there were the scattered elements of much good in his character. What was it that had so fatally disunited them? The repellent power of selfishness. He had, as he said, goodly gifts, rank, and riches, and intellectual power; but the heart, wherein is the balance which harmonises the whole, was corrupt and false; but her sensation was that of relief. One difficulty was removed; her cousin could not long remain in ignorance of his final rejection—nay,

in justice to herself, she determined to mention having seen the Earl for the last time.

“ My way is becoming clear,” was the most distinct idea, as she endeavoured to refix her thoughts upon her book. It was in vain she read and re-read each page, the words might be traced by the eye ; but the mind was far too full to admit the sense ; and in the struggle between reverie and attention, Mrs. Storey returned.

“ I am sure I have a thousand apologies to make, my dear, leaving you all the afternoon by yourself.”

“ Indeed, Mrs. Storey, you need not apologise ; besides I have not been alone. Lord Effingham has been here.”

“ Oh, indeed,” cried Mrs. Storey, eagerly.

“ Yes ; and I do not think we shall be troubled with him any more.”

“ Well, my dear, you know best ; but—” and Mrs. Storey shook her head.

In truth, the kind-hearted little woman was

much attached to Kate, especially since she had been domesticated with her. She would gladly have witnessed her "*entrée*" at court in the character of the Countess of Effingham, and still more gladly shone in the reflected lustre of so brilliant a friend ; but if Miss Vernon did not like him it was very unfortunate.

The next morning brought Kate a letter from Lady Desmond, and another from nurse. The former, after commenting on Colonel Dashwood's sudden appearance in Dublin, and expressing, more constrainedly and coldly than usual, her hopes that Kate was happy, &c., &c., went on to say, "I am annoyed by a strange whim of nurse's ; she will no doubt tell you all about it ; she is determined on leaving me 'to see her people ;' and as the only solution for such an amount of family affection, I must conclude that she is unhappy or uncomfortable in my establishment—I wish she would condescend to mention in what particular ; but this is too candid a line of conduct for persons of

her class." Kate felt deeply the acerbity with which her cousin wrote, and turned anxiously to nurse's letter for an explanation of the affair.

" My own blessed darlin'," it began, " I've a power to tell you ; but, first of all, avourneen, there's yer letter that warmed yer own ould nurse's heart—my hearty thanks for it, jewil. You see, there's three weeks of the four I promised to stay with my lady gone, and I'm wearyin' to see my sisther's daughter and her childre that's doin' well in Killeesh ; and an unfortunate vagabone of a boy, my cousin, they tell me is gone to the bad—so I'm sure, Miss Kate, jewil, ye'll give me lave to step over, and if I get a thrifle of work, sure I'll be better plaised nor to be here doin' nothin', but in everybody's way, an' my lady different to what she used to be—not but that she's good ; but, asthore, I don't know how how she and you parted, an' I never feel asy like with her, so

just tell me you'll let me off stoppin' here any longer."

Kate hardly felt surprise at this intelligence. She had instinctively expected that nurse would not remain long with Lady Desmond ; yet this was an increase of anxiety. "I trust she will not give away all her money," thought Kate, as she sat down to reply to Lady Desmond's letter. She expressed her regret at nurse's determination, urging, however, in extenuation, that her desire to revisit the scenes of her youth, and the few relations she had left, was natural and pardonable. After touching on all the points in her cousin's letter, she found herself concluding her own before she had courage to mention Lord Effingham's name ; she therefore added a short postscript—"I have seen Lord Effingham for the last time." She next wrote her assent to nurse's project, recommending her, however, merely to go on furlough, and not to break altogether with Lady Desmond.

These letters despatched, she joined her hostess.

“You remember, I told you yesterday, I wanted a good long talk with you, Mrs. Storey.”

“Yes, dear, and here I am ready for it.”

“You are very kind to me, Mrs. Storey.”

“La, my love, it’s a pleasure to me.”

“You know I am very poor,” said Kate, not exactly sure how to get into her subject. “I told you at Hampton Court that terrible lawsuit was not concluded, and now it seems it has died a natural death; so I must try and do something for myself.”

A thundering knock here startled and interrupted her.

“Goodness, gracious me,” cried Mrs. Storey, “who can that be? A very smart brougham, my dear, and—let me see—yes—no—it *is* young Mrs. Tom Jorrocks. Well, she is very agreeable, but I wish she had not interrupted us. Delighted to see you, Mrs. Jorrocks—this is so kind and friendly,” &c., &c.

By Mrs. Tom Jorrocks greetings were exchanged, and much was said of the delightful evening she had passed at Raby Villa, of Miss Vernon's charming music, and the beauty of the children ; then the excitement of town was discussed, and young Mrs. Tom Jorrocks admitted that, notwithstanding its pleasures, she should be glad to be once more quietly settled at Leeds. “ And besides all my own engagements,” she continued, “ I am busily employed looking out for a young lady to be a sort of companion to my mother-in-law, who is growing rather blind. She wants some one who will be a cheerful associate, and read aloud nicely, and be like a daughter to her ; she lives with her daughter, Mrs. Wilson, but *she* is so much engaged with her house and servants and sons, Mrs. Jorrocks is often lonely.”

“ I think I know a lady who might suit you,” said Kate, suddenly captivated with the imaginary picture of a gentle, lonely old lady who wanted a daughter’s companionship.

"Indeed it would be a great comfort if I could acquit myself well in the search," said young Mrs. Jorrocks, with a laugh. "My mother-in-law is very wealthy, and would not object to a salary of thirty or forty pounds; she is rather particular, but very kind."

"If you will allow me to call upon you to-morrow, I will let you know more particulars."

"I cannot tell the obligation you would confer upon me should you enable me to get rid of the affair. Might I ask you to call upon me to-morrow at twelve? If not too early, I shall be enchanted to see you."

"At twelve, then, I will be with you," said Kate, with a smile.

"And now, Mrs. Storey, I must bid you good morning. My compliments to Mr. Storey. Good morning Miss Vernon."

"You were surprised. I dare say, at my sudden interest in Mrs. Jorrocks' researches," said Kate to Mrs. Storey, when they were once more alone.

“Yes—no—that is, do go on and tell me—surely it can’t be yourself?”

“It is indeed for myself I wish to secure the engagement,” returned Miss Vernon. “I must resume the thread of my discourse, which Mrs. Jorrocks’ *entré* interrupted. I am sure you are too thoroughly English not to sympathise in my wish to *earn* a livelihood, be it ever so humble, rather than live in dependence, even on a generous and affectionate relative like my cousin; I do not want a large salary, but a home is indispensable—at least,” she added with a sigh, “a respectable protection—for a *home* can never be found among strangers—and this appears to promise fairly enough.”

“Well, my dear, you really take away my breath! I thought you were never to leave Lady Desmond! She told me so herself. I really think you are very foolish. Who would be so fit a person for you to be companion to as your own cousin? What does she think? My goodness! who would have thought it!”

“Lady Desmond will, no doubt, be very averse to my plan, but at present I see no other open to me. I particularly wish not to join her while she is in Ireland—elsewhere I may. Indeed, I should at once have offered myself to Mrs. Jorrocks, but that I thought it right to consult you first—you might not like me to do so.”

“La, my dear, I only wish you to do what you think will be for the best; but, dear me, how astonished Mrs. Tom will be, to be sure! I always told her how fashionable and rich all your friends and relations were,” said Mrs. Storey, in a slightly vexed tone.

“If it annoys you in the least, pray tell me, and I will not say anything more about it—I should be grieved to vex you,” said Kate, with so much sweetness of tone and manner, that Mrs. Storey gave her a hearty kiss, and wished her all success.

“Indeed, dear, you have the right spirit;

and, after all, I dare say you have your own reasons for leaving Lady Desmond!"

"She is always kind and good," said Kate.

Miss Vernon was truly glad to have this explanation so well over; and though anxious as to her future, most thankful for the opening which so unexpectedly offered.

"I can stay there, at all events, till the Winters' return. Oh, when will they write!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning, she started early on her visit to Mrs. Tom Jorrocks, and pondered, as she went, on the difference of her feelings now from those with which she used to seek employment; formerly, she was full of anxious, palpitating hope and fear. Hoping to have good news wherewith to return to grandpapa and nurse—fearing that she might not succeed; but both sensations invigorated and spurred

her on. Now it was for herself alone, she was interested; and she walked calmly, undisturbed by either hope or fear; she was almost surprised at the fearless, careless indifference with which she viewed the future.

“Can it be that I am so much alone! Oh, if I could but live with nurse! I wonder will Mr. Winter renew his proposal to take her as housekeeper when he returns.”

These thoughts brought her to Mrs. Jorrocks’s door. She was most cordially received. The bride was alone; and the first surprise and exclamations over, matters were speedily arranged.

“I am really ashamed to offer you what my mother-in law has limited me to,” said young Mrs. Jorrocks, with some embarrassment.

“You need not mind that,” returned Kate; “I want more a—” she could not desecrate the word “home,” and substituted, “a respectable residence.”

“Well then, I consider you engaged; and

I am sure I shall win golden opinions for sending down such a companion as yourself," returned Mrs. Tom, who had become marvellously familiar and agreeable.

"I had nearly forgotten to ask you where Mrs. Jorrocks lives—a very necessary question."

"Oh, at Carrington—her son-in-law, Mr. Wilson, is a cotton broker there."

"Carrington," repeated Kate, colouring with surprise and emotion.

"Not a very nice place, I grant," said the bride. "But the Wilsons live in the New Park, quite away from the town. Have you ever been there?"

"Yes, once. We used to live at A—, which is only an hour's drive from Carrington."

"I know; we went over there to look at the Cathedral, when I was at Carrington. Then, Miss Vernon, you will be ready to go down next week? My mother-in-law is very anxious for some one who will read to her."

"Yes," said Kate, confused by the flood of

memories which welled up from the depths of her heart, at the sound of these familiar names.

“ Old Mrs. Jorrocks will write and say what day she expects you. I am sure, I am delighted to have concluded this business so satisfactorily.”

“ Then I will wish you good morning.”

“ Good morning, Miss Vernon, good morning !”

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“ Dear Mrs. Storey ! it is all settled !” cried Kate, on finding that lady alone. “ I am going to Carrington—where—where—”

A burst of irrepressible tears choked her voice.

“ My dear girl ! don’t now—there’s a love ! here, smell to the salts,” exclaimed Mrs. Storey, in great perplexity ; she did not un-

derstand the grateful sympathy of silence on such occasions.

“I was so happy there—so unutterably light-hearted! the world was all joy to me—existence in itself a blessing! And to go back there now, when some strange spell seems to have doomed me to utter loneliness! Grandpapa gone, nurse gone, Georgy, Mr. Winter, his kind wife, all I was ever linked with in happy days, far away.”

“My love, don’t go there; stay a bit longer with us; you know, if the house was only a little larger, I would not let you go away for ever so long; but—”

“Dear friend,” said Kate, recovering herself—“I was surprised into this outburst—do not mind it—I am quite resolved to go to Mrs. Jorrocks. Nay, when I have conquered my foolish weakness, I shall be pleased to be near my old haunts. I will go to my room and think—I am always better when I think by myself.”

“ Very well, dear, whatever you like.”

Long and earnestly did Kate think, and her thoughts were prayers. She looked steadily at the past; and, from its trials and blessings, gathered strength for the future.

And fancy, which is ever so strangely at variance with the exterior atmosphere of prosperity or depression, held up a bright picture of Egerton, standing between her and all future loneliness, of his manly tenderness, and simple truth, till she almost fancied she heard his well known voice speaking to her, those lovely words of Longfellow’s—

“ Oh, let thy weary heart rest upon mine,  
And it shall faint no more, nor thirst, nor hunger,  
But be satisfied and filled with my affection,”

“ I am wrong, I am too bold, to let such thoughts glance across my mind. I will not let them come again, how weak, how vain they are! but I can never think of dear grandpapa,

without seeing Colonel Egerton, as it were, beside him, they are so closely linked in my heart."

And with sudden decision she rose, bathed her eyes, and joined Mrs. Storey on a journey to Bond Street.

As young Mrs. Jorrocks had prophesied, Kate received a speedy summons from *La Belle Mère*. The letter was written in much the same style of caligraphy, in which a small "dress-maker" notes down her little account; the orthography was tolerably correct; but the composition was rather confused.

"Poor thing," said Miss Vernon, mentally; "she is probably too blind to write with ease—perhaps her maid acted as amanuensis. I hope she is a loveable person. What wonderful changes I have seen;" and turning to her desk, she wrote to Mrs. Jorrocks, promising to be with her on the specified Thursday.

"Dear nurse used to say Thursday was a lucky day," she said, as she closed the letter.

After some consideration, she determined on informing nurse and her cousin that she was tired of London, and going to stay with some acquaintances she had made through Mrs. Storey. "There can be no use in unnecessarily fretting them," she thought. "I am determined not to go to Georgy till I can trace a very different tone in her letters; she cannot help her suspicions, I believe; but I need not make her more unhappy than she is. How I wish I could see some newspaper announcement of Lord Effingham's departure for the continent!"

But her wish was in vain, Lord Effingham continued to revolve between London and Cowes; and Lady Desmond's reply was strangely commingled with petulance and affection.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CARRINGTON.

IT was a cold, gloomy, blustering evening, in the beginning of September, when the increase of houses, and appearance of hissing and tranquil engines along the line of rail-road, announced to Kate that she was approaching the termination of her journey; she wondered she did not feel more of that sinking of heart, and thrilling of nerves, with which she used to regard any important crisis or event. She felt so terribly depressed, that anything like the hope, implied by fear or anxiety, was quite out of the question; yet there occasionally

glanced across her mind the thought, “have I not come to the worst; perhaps the next change may be for the better.”

“Half-past six—nearly an hour behind time,” said a fat, rosy old gentleman, who sat opposite to Miss Vernon, “and another quarter of an hour will be lost taking the tickets—very bad, very bad,” and he looked at Kate for sympathy; but to her it was a matter of indifference: the train was rather too fast for her wishes.

“They will be fancying all sorts of accidents and concussions at home,” resumed the old gentleman, with a smile of such security in the affection and sympathy to which he was hastening, that the tears sprang to Kate’s eyes, even while she smiled upon him, and said—

“Then I do wish they would go faster—suspense is such a terrible thing.”

The old gentleman seemed struck by the sudden warmth evinced by his hitherto taciturn companion.

"I suppose you have friends to meet you?" he said; "but if I can be of any use in getting your luggage, &c., I shall be very happy."

"I suppose they will send some one to meet me," said Kate, carelessly; "but," she added, a doubt on the point glancing across her mind for the first time, "if not, I will gladly avail myself of your kind offer."

"What part of the town, may I ask, are you going to?"

"Carleton Terrace, New Park."

"Oh, indeed. I live near that myself."

A little more desultory talk brought them to the platform; and stepping from the carriage, Miss Vernon looked round in hopes of discovering the promised person to meet her; but none appeared; therefore, accepting the old gentleman's proffered aid, she proceeded to disentangle her luggage from the miscellaneous and momentarily encreasing pile, which the porters were pitching, with their usual dex-

terity and disregard of consequences, out of the van.

Kate had but few packages ; some undefined feeling had induced her to leave much of her belongings under Mrs. Storey's care—she could not bear to think of Carrington as anything but a temporary abode.

“ Another small black box—the same name—Miss Vernon,” she said to the porter who was collecting her luggage ; her words attracted the notice of an awkward boy of about fifteen, who had been examining the second-class passengers, as if in search of some one ; he was heavy-looking, without being large, his movements slow and uncouth, and his face of a leaden bilious complexion, wore an expression of stupid surprise.

“ Are you Miss Vernon ?” he asked, in an abrupt, harsh voice, which was at its harshest epoch.

“ Yes,” said Kate, looking at him doubtfully, uncertain what rank in society to assign him ;

his face would not have been misplaced under a basket of oranges, nor his clothes on the heir apparent of an earldom.

“All right,” said the interesting youth. “gran’ma sent me to meet you. I’m Pembridge Wilson; shall I call a cab? Busses don’t go near the Park.”

“If you please, a cab,” said Kate; and, turning to her friendly *companion de voyage*, thanked him for his kind attention.

“Holloa, Pem., is that you?” he cried, as his eyes fell on Kate’s new acquaintance. “I did not know I was travelling with a friend of yours. I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again,” he said to Kate, “as you are going to the Wilsons’.”

“I shall be very happy,” she returned, bowing, and walked towards the cab.

“Stop,” whispered Master Pembridge, “make a bargain with the man before they put up the luggage; “you, go—I’ll stay here.”

“No,” said Kate, “I am afraid he would

not mind me much. I dare say, he will not charge more than he ought."

Master Pem's usual state of amazement seemed to receive a slight addition at these words, and as he followed Miss Vernon into the vehicle, a keen ear might have overheard a muttered "my eye!"

The noise of the streets was a good excuse for silence. Kate gazed through the windows, recognising the various localities which she faintly remembered from her short visit there, partly from Egerton's anathematising descriptions, while Pem. gazed, with unremitting assiduity and still surprised, at her.

"Well, here we are, and I expect I am ready for my tea. You were so late, I'm regularly cold waiting for you," and he blew his nose audibly—a perpetual cold in the head characterised this specimen of young Carington.

The door was opened by a melancholy-looking woman, who made no offer to assist the

cabman in removing the trunks, &c., from the vehicle.

“There—I told you,” said Pem., in triumph, as Jehu demanded four and sixpence, and sixpence for the luggage; but Miss Vernon hastily paid him, and entered the house, anxious to see the kind, gentle old lady who wanted a daughter’s companionship.

“Come in, do, and shut that door,” cried a hard, shrill voice from some inner sanctum. “The wind is going right through my head.”

“This way, mem,” said the melancholy female, and Kate entered a small and very hot front parlor. A tall, large, slightly-bent old woman, with a face as hard as her voice, was standing, her hands crossed behind her back, on the hearth-rug. The broad expanse of her countenance was spanned by a pair of capacious spectacles, depressed towards the left eye, as if to give her spying propensities all the advantages of double and single vision.

“Miss Vernon. How do you do? how late

you be," said she, giving Kate a cold, stiff hand, guiltless of closing on the fair soft fingers which took it.

"Yes; the train was very often delayed," replied Kate, letting go, with a sensation of repugnance, the unrelaxed collection of bone and sinews proffered to her, and gazing with surprise at the huge cap, which looked large enough for the mother of Anak's sons, though not at all disproportioned to the head it covered; the old lady was richly and substantially dressed, and had the unmistakeable air of well-lined pockets.

"Go, Pembridge, and look for your mama; you must be nigh starved, and Miss Vernon too, I dare say; get the keys, will you, we are all ready for tea. Will you come near the fire?"

With these mingled directions and remarks, Mrs. Jorrocks, sen., subsided into an arm chair of considerable dimensions, and stared at Kate, who puzzled and confused by so terrible

an awaking from her dream of an interesting old lady, sat for a few minutes in unbroken silence.

“How did you leave Mrs. Tom,” was at length asked by Miss Vernon’s new acquaintance.

“Quite well. I saw her the day before yesterday ; she desired many kind messages to you.”

“They have been very gay up in London ; time she settled at home.”

“Mrs. Jorrocks seems anxious to do so,” replied Kate.

“So she tells you ; she be sharp enough ; you were coming to me. Had you a quiet journey ?”

“Very, thank you. I met a most polite old gentleman—a neighbour of yours, at least, he knew your grandson.”

“Who can that be ? what was he like ?”

Kate described him.

“That will be Mr. Davis. I wonder what took him to London? we—”

She was interrupted by the entrance of her daughter.

Mrs. Wilson was a much more prepossessing person; she was rather an exaggerated edition of Mrs. Storey—fatter, louder, more gossiping, and less kind-hearted. She was older too; but still, rather pretty and very well dressed. She welcomed Kate cordially enough, and proposed shewing her her room before tea. It was a tiny chamber, but all her own, and Kate was glad of its solitude for a few moments before joining the party below.

When she descended to the dining-room, she found an addition to the circle in the person of the eldest son—a lad about a year older than Pem., thin and fair; his countenance shewed a much higher degree of intelligence than his brother’s. He was reading when Kate came in, and looked up to bow, (not to rise) for exactly the space of time necessary for that operation.

Pem. was also reading—a newspaper was his study—he seemed to get on with difficulty, constantly snuffling, and elevating his eyebrows, as if vainly attempting to open his small eyes wider than nature intended.

“Now then, Miss Vernon, I am sure you are ready for tea,” said Mrs. Wilson. “I ordered you a couple of eggs; you will want something more substantial than a bit of toast after your journey.”

Kate silently agreed, longing for a glass of wine after her fatigue of body and mind. However, she took a cup of tea very readily, albeit washy enough.

“Who do you think Miss Vernon travelled down with?”

“Why how should I know, mother?”

“Mr. Davis!”

“Nev-er! I did not know he was up in town.”

“It’s very strange,” said Mrs. Jorrocks with a significant nod of the head, “That patent he

have paid so much money on, is not going straight I dare say."

"Mr. Davis, if he is the gentleman, did not get in till we reached Wolverton," said Kate.

"Wolverton," repeated Mrs. Wilson, "Whatever was he doing at Wolverton?" Mrs. Jorrocks incapable of solving this problem shook her head with awful significance, as she munched her buttered toast. The young gentlemen read sociably all through the meal. "Here James," said Mrs. Wilson to her eldest son, "Put this sugar basin away do, I am so hot and tired pouring out tea; I dare say" (pronounced "dessay,") Miss Vernon will make tea for us now."

The evening appeared very interminable to Kate; the boys were set to their lessons immediately after tea, with an injunction from their mother not to leave any for the morning, it made them so late at their "breakfastes," and then mother and daughter in a species of duett expatiated on the wonderful talents and acquire-

ments of the eldest son, until having exhausted their subject they commenced a severe cross examination of herself, when a loud ring disturbed the enquiry, and Mrs. Wilson started from her seat exclaiming "Law! how Wilson do ring." Mr. Wilson was a short, thick man of even a more dingy, leaden-yellow hue than his son; small piggish eyes, thick hearth-brush looking hair, and a voice of unredeemed harshness, such as one might expect from a slave driver, were his most striking characteristics. He was however civil enough, made due enquiries after his brother-in-law, asked if town was full, and the opera well attended, (oblivious in his anxiety to put these fashionable queries, that it was September), and finally betook himself to devour some chops, the bones of which he polished with surprising dexterity, first however sending the boys to bed with a sudden imperious sternness that absolutely startled Kate; she soon pleaded fatigue and bid them good night. "We have prayers at half-past eight, Miss Vernon," said Mrs. Wilson.

“Indeed, well I shall be ready.”

The dreariness of those hours when Kate had extinguished her candle, and in the darkness of night gave herself up to grief, we will not attempt to describe—the exaggeration of distance between her and all she had ever known—the agonised longing for some escape,—the sense of utter estrangement from every familiar style of thought and feeling—the inexpressible loathing of all around her; are not these things written in the chronicles of many a memory? “Oh for a sound of nurse’s voice! she is so true, so loving, and Georgy, why are you so far away. Will Mr. Winter never, never return! Is my life to pass away thus with these terrible people. Oh grandpapa! I am so alone.” And ever with the thought of him Egerton’s image rose before her; she was too miserable to curb her thoughts as she was wont, and from the silent depths of her heart, her spirit called to him agonisingly; with unutterable longing, thirsting for a sound

of his voice, as though it were a spell to conjure away the gloom and the difficulties round her, striving, panting in a death struggle for happiness. Who dare limit the power lent to the divine essence by the force of a mighty wish, when we feel the intense longings of the imprisoned spirit darting in electric streams towards the object so ardently desired. There are momentary glimpses granted to the imagination, when purified by the agony of suffering, of grandeur, power and liberty, so far beyond our mortal state, that the first return to a commoner and calmer frame of mind, is usually indicated by a shudder or a smile at our own "strange fancies."

Yet what may not the spirit anticipate in its future? and what power may not be momentarily lent it? even here a foretaste of that future. The very depth of her emotion soothed Kate; she felt a gradual calm stealing over her—was it that her wild yearning had accomplished its end?

About the same time, it might be the same night, far away, a deep blue, star-lit eastern sky was shining in still beauty over the cantonments of an English regiment, and Colonel Egerton was sleeping the restless disturbed sleep of a low fever. He wakes suddenly—fully roused—with a sense that he was wanted—that he was called. Yet he had not dreamt, at least, distinctly ; nor was it till after some moments' thought, he connected that sudden impression with Miss Vernon—for Egerton was too full of rational energy to have his mind perpetually filled with one image. He had loved Kate, and still, at times, thought of her with deep tenderness ; but a life of activity pleased and occupied him. Parting with her had swept away the light-hearted, buoyant gaiety of his early days ; but left enough of cheerfulness to make life still very enjoyable. Time, absence, silence, above all, Burton's report, not long received, were gradually doing their work—ere long, his heart would have

been free to cherish another, well and truly ; yet never, oh, never, with the same exquisitely tender, pure unselfish love which she had breathed over the chaotic surface of his life ; he still might taste the sweetness of the grape ; but the unspeakable loveliness of its first fresh bloom was breathed upon—and vanished.

Colonel Egerton was worse the next morning ; the regimental surgeon shook his head, and, at length, obtained a hearing, when, for the fourth time, he suggested native air.

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Life at Carrington, with its innumerable small trials, is too monotonous to be carefully recorded.

Kate had much to suffer ; yet it was not all suffering. She soon perceived the various *rôles* enacted by the family. Mr. Wilson was a thorough domestic tyrant, intense selfishness pervaded the whole party, except, perhaps,

Mrs. Wilson. The eldest son was a pedant, a dry, cold calculating machine, who seemed chiefly to value his own unblemished character, because it gave him a right to be implacable to the failings of others. It is strange to write thus of the character of a boy not seventeen ; but none could connect him with the faintest outline of that lovely, erring thing called "youth."

He was, however, an unceasing source of pride to his family ; and even Pem., if he had an idea beyond his dinner, looked upon his brother as something quite extraordinary.

The day began with a severe trial, at least to Kate, in the shape of morning prayers. She shrank from Mr. Wilson's harsh tones, doling forth the gracious words of the gospel ; and her rebellious thoughts refused to follow the long discursive address they all knelt down to hear read aloud, in accents of self-satisfied conscientiousness. Mr. Wilson dwelt, with unction,

on the petition for the health and safety of his sovereign lady the Queen, and at the proper place even mentioned the servants, who, with demure and downcast looks occupied three chairs at the furthest possible distance permissible by the limits of the room. Then followed breakfast, at which he generally took the worth of his prayers out of them, in short, savage fault finding.

The morning meal over, Mrs. Jorrocks took her knitting, and Kate's duty was to read aloud, to her, till dinner time—one o'clock. But the books in which Mrs. Jorrock's soul delighted, were, unfortunately, of a class by no means suited to Miss Vernon. They were chiefly remarkable for the distinguished rank and general hard-heartedness of their characters, excepting only the heroine and her lover, whose sufferings, mental and physical, were rather supernatural; and usually drew tears from Kate's listener, who would have turned

unmoved from the most affecting case of real distress ; to be sure the novel only asked her tears, reality might have had some pretensions to touch her pocket.

Kate, however, read on perseveringly, she had made some attempts to recommend the style of book more suited to her own taste, and the age of her new protectress ; but they were not well received, and she was compelled to return to the “dungeon and subterranean passage,” revengeful, mysterious-stranger class of literature ; still this was nothing to the task of reading aloud the newspapers. The police reports formed Mrs. Jorrocks’ chief delight, and she expected Kate to read aloud, unhesitatingly the awful and revolting disclosures which the liberty of the press demands should disgrace its columns. This duty Kate gently and firmly refused, and she received unexpected support from Mrs. Wilson, who offered to read them herself. Nothing surprised Miss Vernon more than the untiring assiduity with which

Mrs. Jorrocks devoted herself to the elucidation of her neighbours' affairs ; none were too humble, none too exalted for her universal curiosity. The house-maid's lover, and the mayor's wife, the charwoman, and the duchess—she had scandalous stories of them all ! Kate sometimes wondered if she thought well of her own children ; she was never actively cross, nor could you ever discern that she was pleased, save on those rare occasions when a couple of aggravated failures amongst her acquaintances—a murder, a suicide, and the elopement of somebody's husband or wife, by their united excitement enabled her to pass a cheerful and satisfactory morning. Kate was almost surprised to perceive she was actually gaining favour in the eyes of this uncongenial old woman. She did not know the effect which her own grace and refinement produced upon the stiff, rugged, clayey nature she was thus brought in contact with. Each member of the family felt instinctively her superiority to them-

selves, while her unassuming gentleness prevented any of that soreness of feeling with which superiority is usually acknowledged ; and although at first Kate was often disagreeably surprised to find that her presence was unnoticed when visitors came in, and no conversation was addressed to her who had been ever accustomed to find herself an object in society ; yet all this wore off soon, and both Mrs. Jorrocks and her daughter learned to be proud of their elegant-looking inmate.

The greatest relief Miss Vernon experienced during this *triste séjour* was from the kind attentions of Mr. Davis's family, who were their near neighbours, and presented Kate with what she considered a beau ideal of an English merchant's family—hospitable, intellectual, well educated ; respecting their own middle-class position, without a trace of that envious malignity towards rank which so often distinguishes *les nouveaux riches*. They might, perhaps, lack that extreme outward grace of manner

and bearing, which nothing but an infancy and childhood passed among the refining influences of aristocratic accessories can bestow; but in every essential point they were ladies and gentlemen. A few hours passed with them was an inexpressible refreshment to Kate's spirit, and warmly was she received: they delighted in her music, and she willingly sang, even her most sacred songs, for them. Another—the only other comfort in Kate's life, was that Mrs. Jorrocks always retired early, and then she used to lock her door, and, if she felt her heart strong enough, indulge herself in a long study of the sketches Egerton had given her of Dungar and of the Priory.

Meantime Lady Desmond's letters were pretty constant, she repeatedly pressed Kate to return, sometimes with an earnestness that bespoke truth—sometimes with a certain coldness; but Miss Vernon's invariable reply was—that she would not join her, at all events, until after Christmas.

Nurse's letters always filled Kate's heart with a curious mixture of pleasure and pain—she forced herself to write to that faithful friend, with unreal cheerfulness; and nurse, who was totally ignorant of Carrington, and its inhabitants, was happy in believing "Miss Kate was stoppin' in some grand place, away from thim shop-keeping Storeys." She had persisted in her intention of leaving Lady Desmond; and the following is the account she gave of herself, in a letter received by Kate, about a fortnight after she had reached Carrington :—

" You'll be surprised to see where I write from, but afther mee goin' hot foot to Killeesh, there was'nt the sign of wan belongin' to me in the place, an' nothing but the hoigth of misery and starvation. The Priest's house-keeper, a dacent woman, took me in the chapel-house; an' the next day, I walked the whole eight miles over to Dungar. Oh, Miss Kate,

agra ! it was the sore sight to me ! like the corpse of wan ye loved, it was—there was the dear ould place, and the house that was iver open, an' the wood, an' the stones, an' the say—but the life an' the heart was gone out of it, an' glory be to God ! the divils that tuck it never had luck nor grace, but has been tearin' each other, at law, iver since ; an yez might have lived in pace for all they got out of it. I said mee prayers on the hall door steps, where the masther (the heaven's be his bed !) used to stan' an' hear all the poor people had to say. I thought the life would lave me when I rus meesilf to go back — I had no strength ; but be the hoight of luck, who come upon a low back ear, but ould Paddy Byrne—'twas he was glad to see me, an' quite moidhered to find me there without yerself—so he give me a cast to Killeesh ; but I was so sick of the sorra, I could do nothin' for—that I come away afther mee sистher's daughter here —they'e doing very well, an' have a nice

little shop, with soap an' candles ; an' tay an' kid gloves ; an' all to that in it. An' I'm tired of bein' idle, so take in a thrifle iv work, an' clear-starchin'—I get plinty from the officers' ladies, an' it amuses me till ye send for me, ah ! whin 'ill that be, avourneen ?

Mee lady and me parted great frinds, an' she put five goulden guineas in mee hand, an' tauld me to come back whin iver I like, so I've not touched yer money agra ! but I must stop, for I'm tired intirely with the writin'."

This long letter was written from Fermoy, and passionately did Kate weep over the picture it drew of her deserted home.

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Time rolled on rapidly, for little occurred to mark it, and Kate had almost ceased to battle with the dull despondency that was creeping over her. The perpetual reading aloud of in-

sipid romances, which alone found favour in the eyes of Mrs. Jorrocks ; the efforts to keep awake in the close atmosphere of the stifling parlour, the occasional outburst of tyrannic rage from Mr. Wilson, savage as they were in all the rude reality of a rugged nature, excited into forgetfulness of its efforts to be " genteel ;" and, which though never addressed to Kate, seemed to insult her by their unrestrained violence ; these various petty annoyances, daily, hourly, repeated, made up a terrible sum—occasionally the wild wish to escape to nurse, even if it were to join her in plain work, and clear-starching — would swell her heart to bursting, and then would come the reaction ! Where in truth could she go ? Her cousin's alternations of coldness and affection, she could not brave—no ; it was due to herself to keep aloof, until some more cordial acknowledgment of her error and injustice was made by Lady Desmond.

Mrs. Storey wrote seldom, and did not make any renewal of her invitation—of other friends

or relatives, she had none, at least, in the true meaning of these words. So the passionate yearning with which her thoughts ever sprang to seek the means of escape, after treading the same circle over and over, returned like a bird, weary of beating the wires of its cage, to their last hope—a letter from Winter, on his return.

But it is weary work to dwell upon the sameness of such suffering ; none can fully appreciate it, save those enlightened by experience—though many might have found companionship to Mrs. Jorrocks a severer probation. The world must become older, and purer, and more christianised, before the exercise of power can be resisted, or the charm of torturing those who are weak, foregone.

Sunday was a day of great eating at Carlton-terrace—in short, Mrs. Wilson, on that day, indulged the household in a dinner, the usual week-day meals not deserving the name. On these occasions Master Pem. eat till he

could eat no more, and paused in silent regret, that nature had provided such insufficient stowage. The scholar, James, was less eager, but more select, and ever sent up his plate, accompanied with some especial direction, as to the particular dainties he desired. Mr. Wilson's efforts did not fall far short of those of his offspring ; and if vexed by any errors in elegance, on the part of his wife, regaled the party over a bottle of port, with some choice anecdotes of various celebrities, fashionable and political, which smacked strongly of the commercial-room — frequent repetition might have robbed them of their first freshness, but his family were well trained, and always laughed at the right place.

Sunday morning, at church, was perhaps the proudest moment of Mr. Wilson's life, when he stood erect and spruce in his pew ; and, condescendingly, classed himself in audible tones with the other “ miserable sinners ” of the congregation. No part of the service

did he neglect—he even joined in the singing, with a voice so utterly discordant, that Kate absolutely started, and turned to look from whence the horrid sounds proceeded, the first time she heard them. Church was the grand theatre of display to Mesdames Jorrocks and Wilson and the great proportion of their acquaintances ; and a lively topic of conversation on their return home.

“Did you see what a velvet mantle Mrs. B —, have on ? asks the mother.”

“Yes ; it cost ten guineas, if it cost a penny,” returns the daughter.

“And her husband be deep in the “great Midland ;” maybe, next year she’ll have to wear Linsey-woolsey.”

“You never see such lace as Miss F. had, trimming her bonnet—that depth,” cried Mrs. Wilson, with eager rapidity, and holding out a finger, &c.

Then came a few words on the sermon, which was quickly despatched ; and thus was

the interval between church and dinner whiled away ; and though it may place Miss Vernon very far back on the list of any sanctified reader, it must be confessed she never looked forward with much pleasure to the day of rest. Mr. Wilson's anecdotal powers were rather too much to endure for an entire sabbath day.

The third month of Kate's purgatorial sojourn, was opening gloomily enough, when one Sunday morning, as they were assembled at breakfast, in more than usually gorgeous array —as a popular preacher was expected to draw “a full house—” a loud ring announced the post.

“ I'll engage it's for Miss Vernon,” said Mrs. Jorrocks, “ I never see such a many letters as you do get.”

But Kate did not heed her, her eyes were fastened on the letter handed across the table by Master Pem. who detained it to read the direction, observing—“ It's a gentleman's hand,” and eliciting a stern—“ Hold your

tongue, sir," from his father. A mist swam before Kate's eyes, and a spasm of hope and fear shook her heart as she recognised Langley's hand, "it must be a letter from Mr. Winter," she murmured, "will you allow me?" and with trembling fingers broke the seal—but no, it was from Langley himself. Oh, Heavens! had any thing happened.

" MY DEAR MISS VERNON,

" I lose no time in informing you that I had a letter this morning from Winter, dated the 20th, nearly three weeks ago; he writes in good health and spirits, and talks of returning immediately; he is anxious to know where you are; uncertainty on this point, from some passage in your last letter, having kept him silent. I should not be surprised at his arrival any day.

" Hoping this letter may find you well, and in haste to catch the post.

" Your's faithfully,

" WILLM. Langley."

The first movement of her mind was disappointment, that Winter had not written to herself.

“I thought I told him to direct as usual, to Mr. Langley; there must have been some mistake; I forget what I wrote, but he may be back very soon, perhaps next week—and then—”

What a bright indistinct feeling of hope and freedom expanded her heart—yet she felt strangely nervous and trembling, as if the shadow of some coming crisis had fallen upon her, and she hastily swallowed a glass of cold water to refresh her parched mouth, before performing the inevitable journey to church.

Mr. Wilson’s pew was irreproachable in point of size and position, it was not however faultless, for a large pillar, supporting the gallery, reduced one corner to an invisible nook, where the most splendid bonnet, and richest brocade might be for ever hidden from the eyes of an admiring congregation. Here

Kate had established her position, and was permitted to retain it unmolested, and in most profound and grateful thanksgiving she knelt that morning.

The church was crowded to excess—strangers stood in the aisle—under the pulpit—in the door-ways—pew-openers waxed curt and imperious in the exercise of unusual powers. Several well-dressed individuals had been accommodated with seats in Mr. Wilson's pew, when Kate's eye was involuntarily attracted by the distinguished air of a gentleman, who had been shown into a seat, two or three rows in front of her, during the second lesson; his back was towards her, of course, and she felt vexed with herself for the pertinacity with which her eyes and thoughts returned to him; his tall figure seemed familiar to her, as she contrasted its easy grace with the forms around; so did the wavy dark brown hair, the proud turn of the head, and as she gazed, her heart throbbed, and the colour mounted to her

cheeks. Surely it was a waking dream, yet she could not be mistaken. No! it must be him—that bow, as he returned a book, she had dropped, to the lady next him, none but Egerton could have made it. Oh, that he would turn his face; but he still stood or sat in the same position, and Kate, every pulse beating, now pale, now flushing, striving vainly to think of the service—her thoughts, now darting away into the past, now crying from the depths of her soul to God for strength for the future, tried to still the wild glowing anticipations which swept in sudden rapture over her spirit, as the aurora borealis streams across the northern gloom. It was too bold, too far-fetched a thought that he still remembered her, why should she expect it.

At last, Doctor M—— mounted the pulpit, the hymn was finished, and with a rustle of expectation the audience settled themselves in their seats then—then the individual who engrossed Kate's every thought, turned to face

the preacher, and leaning his arm on the back of the pew, revealed his well-known profile, and ended her uncertainty.

Doctor M—— preached well, and Egerton listened attentively, but the sound of his voice scarce reached Kate's ears. In her quiet nook, she gazed uninterruptedly on the face so often seen in her sleeping and waking visions, at last, after so much of trial and suffering, restored to her—the vague unacknowledged hope that had woven one golden thread through her dreams of the future, where they, in sober earnest, about to be accomplished? How she longed to hear his voice, as if at its first sound the past would return to her, as it was when they had parted. It was strange how he had twined himself round her heart—he from whom she had parted without much of pain; but now indissolubly linked with all that was brightest and best in her life, all that she had loved and lost. Sorrow had revealed his heart to hers, and the light of memory had shown

her the true meaning of those silent indications of bitter regret with which he had left her. And now he looked older, darker, graver — calm thought had deepened the expression of his eyes, and imparted a certain dignity to his brow, and Kate felt he was no longer the gay, careless soldier she had dared to lecture. There was a repose that bespoke strength even in his attitude, and she longed to meet his eye, yet shrank from it with fevered anticipation. Still he listened with grave, quiet, attention to the eloquent reasoning of the preacher—and Kate grew restless, and fearful that he would not see her; she calculated the chances of their meeting, when the congregation was dispersing, and thought it could not possibly fail to occur; but the very doubt filled her with terror; if they did not meet now, months, years might pass over before their dissimilar roads in life would again cross! and even if he should remember, or enquire for her, who was there who could give him a clue

to her whereabouts ; but the congregation was bending to receive the benediction, and the decisive moment arrived. Colonel Egerton, with a bow of acknowledgment to the owner of the seat, in which he had been placed, rose, and gazing abstractedly over the crowd, above which his tall figure rose proudly — moved down the aisle ; the pressure compelled him to stop a moment by the door of Mr. Wilson's pew, but the large pillar interposed itself between Kate and the recognising glance, for which she so yearned. Mrs. Jorrocks never was so slow in her movements—she never leant so heavily before on Kate's slight arm, all quivering with the wild beating of her heart ; still they were but a few steps behind him—if he would only turn his head ! but no ; he dreamt not of the imprisoned spirit, so passionately yearning to catch one glance from eyes, through which he gazed so listlessly ! They were in the door-way, and freed from the crowd, Colonel Egerton paused a moment, as

if to decide on his movements—put on his hat, and turning to the right, walked away with a quick, firm, soldierly step—away—out of sight—gone !

There was talk of Doctor M——'s wonderful sermon, as they wended their way home—of how he had finally and utterly annihilated the Pope ; but Kate heard no sound, save a sad echo in her heart repeating—“ gone—gone.”

Vain would it be to describe the anguish with which she threw herself on her bed, when free and alone, and gave herself up to an agony of hysterical sobs. Was it a dark fate hanging over her, ever to catch glimpses of happiness, and there to lose them ? Why need she hope or struggle any more—all she longed for, was darkness and silence—never, never again might she be as she was ; when such a trifling hindrance debarred her from so bright a meeting, dare she hope the insuperable barrier of distance would ever be removed ? She could not rouse herself from

this paroxysm—the buoyancy of her spirit seemed, at last, worn out ; and head and heart alike aching, she lay in the stillness of exhaustion, across her bed, when the servant came to summon her to dinner.

“I think Mrs. Tom have sent me a bad bargain after all,” was Mrs. Jorrocks’s observation, on receiving an account of Miss Vernon’s indisposition. “I see I’ll have to pay my forty pounds a year for the nursetending of her —she looked like a ghost this week, and didn’t mind a word she was reading of—but it’s always the way—new brooms.”

“Well I’m sure, mother, it’s only the heat at church—she will be better to-morrow.”

“She need’nt go to church, if she don’t like to.”

Kate only asked for quiet, and her own room, unmolested, for a few days—this was permitted her ; and there she lay, through the long, weary, dark hours, brooding over the past, sometimes struggling with nature’s re-

pugnance to depression ; but for awhile careless and indifferent to all without ; then she strove to rally her scattered forces, to remember that Winter was soon to return.

“ And until that hope too is gone, I will not despair—God is so good, and wise—He sees I have had so much sorrow—He will send me joy, sooner or later—yes ; I will hope still.”

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE LAST.

THE Saturday after the event last recorded, Kate was bending sadly enough over her daily task, reading the *Court Circular* to Mrs. Jor-rocks—her thoughts wandering to some letters from Lady Desmond, and from nurse, which she had not had the heart to answer.

“The Countess of P——, is entertaining a large party at P—— Castle—the Prince di ——, and Count Alphonso di ——, are among the distinguished visitors.

“The Earl of Effingham left Cowes, on Tuesday last, in his yacht, the ‘Meteor,’ for

St. Petersburg, where we understand it is his lordship's intention to winter."

"He be a shocking man," observed Mrs. Jorrocks, *en parenthèse*, "such stories as Mr. Wilson have heard of him up in London. Go on please—I think you be half asleep this morning."

But Kate was now wide awake—so he was gone at last—Lady Desmond must hear it—all would be clear to her—she could no longer doubt! Miss Vernon took fresh courage, and began again:—

"A matrimonial alliance between the Marquis of ——, and the beautiful ——."

A loud ring.

"Whoever can ring so loud!—they'll bring down the bell! one would think they wished to —stay till I ask Eliza," exclaimed Mrs. Jorrocks.

In another moment, Eliza put in her head—

"Please, Miss Vernon, you're wanted."

Kate rose, and left the room, carelessly,

thinking Mrs. Wilson required her presence ; but the instant she passed the door, her eyes fell upon a stout, dumpy figure, which, hat in hand, stood on the door-mat—an unmistakeable figure, for a sight of which she had so pined. What she said, or did, she could not tell ; some vague remembrance of throwing her arms round his neck, and sobbing there—she did preserve ; but Winter has often said—that the way in which she clung to him, as if she could never grasp so blessed a reality close enough—her eager caresses—her broken exclamations of joy, affected him deeply, and revealed her past sufferings, more eloquently, than the most elaborate description.

“ Well ; but, *figlia mia*,” said Winter, as she grew a little calmer, and they sat together in the fireless dining-room ; “ you look pale and thin,” and he held her from him, and gazed at her till the moisture stood in his keen, black eyes. “ My dear child, I am much to blame—I have neglected you ; but I

will atone for it—your last letter misled me completely ; yet I ought to have returned home before.”

“ Oh ! no, no ! you are always good. Thank God—thank God, you are come at last.”

“ Yes ! We arrived on Wednesday, and the next day I called on Langley ; he gave me a sketch of your proceedings that thoroughly perplexed me. I had matters to arrange on Friday morning which could not be postponed, but my wife gave me no peace till I started by the mail train at nine o’clock last evening—so here I am !” Kate listened in rapt attention—was she really sitting once more beside the kind good artist ? “ My child, I fear you have suffered much, but we will try to cheer you up ; if you prefer doing the thing independently, Mrs. Winter has grown a great lady, and requires a companion quite as much as Mrs. Rollocks, or Jollocks, or whatever her name is—and her husband too,” continued Winter,

more thickly than ever. “In a few weeks I shall have my house in A.—back on my hands—what say you, Kate, to making the old couple happy till you go to a home of your own? We may not be gay; but—”

“Oh! hush, hush! You do not know how overpoweringly delightful such a vision seems to me.”

“Vision!—*Corpo di Bacco*, it shall be reality; and Mrs. O’Toole! my adopted daughter must have her own maid—*che gloria*—I have been expecting to see her broad, honest face every minute. My Kate—it must have gone hard with you to part with her.”

But Kate could not speak—she could only clasp Winter’s hand in both of hers, and murmur a broken thanksgiving, her eyes rivetted on her companion in speechless gratitude.

“But this is all waste of time,” resumed Winter, “and you will have enough to do to be ready to return with me by the two o’clock train—Mrs. Winter expects us to tea this evening.”

“This evening!—Oh! I can be ready in a moment,” cried Kate rapturously. “But,”—her countenance fell—“I must not, I fear—I could not be rude to these people; they have been civil to me in their way.”

“*Poter del mondo! cospetta!*” cried Winter thickly and stoutly; “I will lose sight of you no more, and I have no time to stay in this confounded cotton-spinning metropolis. Let me see these dragons of yours. I am he that will bell the cat.”

So they went into the front parlour, Kate still clinging to his arm.

“My friend, Mr. Winter, Mrs. Jorrocks,” said Kate.

“Please to sit down, sir,” returned that lady.

“I am come to take Miss Vernon away with me,” began Winter, in abrupt and decided tones.

“Oh! you be——But I think it is rather

sudden. What am I to do—and where will you be if I say no?"

" My dear madam, I shall still be in Carring-ton. It is quite natural you should not like to part with Miss Vernon; in short, she ex-pressed to me her reluctance to leave you, abruptly, and all that sort of thing; but I want her, and my wife wants her, and I am sure you will not stand in her way."

Here Mrs. Wilson entered in a new cap, and Winter was duly presented.

" This gentleman is for taking Miss Vernon away to-day. I declare he has quite took away my breath," said Mrs. Jorrocks.

" *Never*," returned her daughter. " Well, if that isn't the strangest thing."

" Oh! as Miss Vernon is in such a hurry I'll not stop her, only since she has broken her engagement she must take the consequences."

" That is not of the least importance," said Mr. Winter.

" It would distress me to seem rude where

I have received courtesy," said Kate ; " but surely you must sympathise in my anxiety to be once more domesticated with such kind and valued friends. Mr. Winter must return to town ; I should much like to accompany him."

And thereupon Mesdames Jorrocks and Wilson burst forth into a vociferous and vituperative duet—

"There was gratitude for you ! She had been treated more like a daughter than a dependent ; and what was she but a companion after all. There was no end to the favours she had received, but it was the way with the Irish always. It would be a lesson to them how to treat the next companion they got ! And now, when this gentleman, whom they had never heard of before, appears, as if from the clouds, Miss Vernon is ready to walk off with him. It was very odd his wife (if he *had* a wife) could not wait a day or two—people who had to earn their bread should be very careful—and what would Mr. Wilson say," &c., &c.

“Kate, my dear,” said Winter, coolly, “go and put up your things—I see this is no place for you—I will wait here.”

She left the room, much annoyed to be obliged to part with Mrs. Jorrocks on such terms, yet to stay behind Winter was an impossibility; so, resolutely determining, she hastily packed up her worldly effects, remembering, thankfully, the different mood in which she had last stowed them away.

Winter meantime exerted himself to converse with the amiable mother and daughter, and not without effect. He talked in his most eccentric and abrupt manner, and finally impressed them with the notion that he was a whimsical but wealthy millionaire, to whose fancies it was Kate’s interest to accommodate herself. Matters, consequently, wore a less stormy aspect on Kate’s return to the sitting-room; both ladies were cool, and Winter very lively.

“So you are off, Miss Vernon,” said Mrs.

Wilson ; “I did not think we should part so sudden.”

“I offer Miss Vernon the alternative to return with me, and be my daughter and heiress, or to remain here and be neither,” broke in Winter conclusively.

“Well, I suppose you had better go—you acknowledge I owe you nothing,” put in Mrs. Jorrocks.

“I do indeed ! Will you give this note, with my kindest regards, to Mrs. Davis ?” returned Kate.

“And,” observed Winter, “permit your servant to call a cab.”

A few more awkward moments, and the cab drove up.

“Well, good bye, Mrs. Jorrocks—you forgive my abrupt departure ?”

“I suppose I must—good bye ;” and again the rigid hand was held out stiff and cold.

“Good bye, Miss Vernon—I wish you ’appy,” said Mrs. Wilson, and she was free !

It was a gloomy, drizzling November day, yet she thought there was something cheery in the sensation of safety from wet conveyed by the substantial look of the carriages drawn up beside the platform, where Winter's impatience hurried them nearly an hour too soon. He had tried to persuade Kate to eat something during this interval, and though excitement left her little appetite, she swallowed a sandwich and a glass of wine to please him.

At last, the arrival of luggage and passengers became more frequent and hurried—first and second bells were rung—places taken—doors banged—a jerk forward—another back—and they were off—not at full speed at once, but slowly through the tunnel—leaving Kate time to look at the spot where she felt so desolate, the day she arrived; and, contrasting her present feelings with that terrible period, she knew, for the first time, perhaps, how much she had suffered. It was better for her that the disappointment at Egerton's not recognis-

ing her had come before, not after Winter's return—it was something to keep the balance of her heart amid so much delight. The recollection of it had never left her mind for a single instant since the Sunday before, till Winter's presence had, for a moment, over-powered it with a flood of light. Already, however, it was beginning to return, yet less gloomily, less hopelessly, mingling with some more clearly acknowledged sense of duty to herself—that it was too bold, too unmaidenly to think so much of one who perhaps thought but little of her! Yes—she was strong enough to be proud again. Oh! the enjoyment of that journey! everything looked so pleasant—even the drenched country through which they flew—and the stiff, old-maidish-looking woman opposite, who read “vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation” the whole way—munching biscuits till the carriage was strewn with the vestiges of modern crumbs; and the two gentlemen, one from Hampshire,

and the other from North of the Tweed, who discussed Free Trade so warmly with Mr. Winter—and dear Mr. Winter himself, his rosy, round, well-shaven face, with its twinkling eyes, sparkling over a dark brown Spanish cloak, of melo-dramatic dimensions, majestically folded round him, while his head was cosily tied up in a templar cap, with flaps over the ears ! How radiant is each object viewed through the medium of a happy heart !

Then as evening closed in, and after rushing by many a quiet little station with its red flag, and signal-man's outstretched arms, how joyous was Winter's look, as he drew out his watch.

“ Half-past four ! we shall be at Euston Square not long after eight.”

A few minutes pause at Wolverton, while the porters trampling heavily overhead put in the lighted lamps—and jerk, clash—they were off again. The Hampshire gentleman drew

up a window that had been slightly open, and renewed his argument.

“And though the legislature leaves the farmer no protection, the legislators will not lower their rents a fraction. Why, down in my county, Lord Egerton, of Allerton, took off two and a half per cent last year ; and to read the address, and hear the speeches he made about it, you would think he had made each tenant a present of his holding. Thanking Heaven for putting so christian an act into his heart, &c., &c. ; and now they say he will never recover ; and his brother will be putting the screw on again, I suppose.”

“Is Lord Egerton ill then ?” asked Winter, with some interest.

“He had a paralytic seizure about four or five months ago, and has been in a very bad state ever since ; his brother, Colonel Egerton, was sent for to India ; he was down at Allerton a short time since, not very well himself, I believe.”

Kate's soul was in her ears during this communication ; and while she chided herself for thinking of him, her thoughts dwelt on Eger-ton, till, at last, wearied by the excitement, she had gone through, her slight, graceful form lent more and more against the side of the carriage, and she slept. Winter carefully drew her cloak round her, and fastened it closer to her throat ; and, as she opened her eyes, slightly roused by his movement, she silently thanked God that she was no more uncared for and alone.

“ Tickets if you please,” were the next sounds that met her ear—“ Great time ! only just eight,” from Winter, as she looked up bewildered after the disturbed sleep in which she had indulged.

“ Where are we ?”

“ Near home,” said Winter, while his bead-like eyes twinkled with more than usual vivacity.

“ Sure you have left no indispensable carpet-

bag behind? got your parasol? all right—in with you—14, Orchard Street—drive fast."

And away through dull, dark streets, now whisk round a corner into a blaze of light and flaring gas jets over butchers' stalls—now winding through omnibusses—anon dashing past the brilliantly lit up *entré* to some concert room—again into darkness undiminished save by the street lamps and hall lights—then a rumble over the side stones.

"Here we are," from Winter—as the door flew open before their charioteer could knock.

Mrs. Winter, standing under the lamp, in a cap that looked as if it had been made at A—, herself neat, as though she never had encountered a Spanish flea.

"Dearest Kate! I thought you would never come!"

A sobbing, joyous embrace, and she was swept up-stairs, where even the London lodging looked homelike under Mrs. Winter's be-

nign influence. Then came the plentiful tea—hot cakes, and broiled ham and eggs, with mulled port for the lady, and brandy-and-water for the gentleman—and the delicious confusion of cross questions, and most irrelevant answers—and the mingling of tears and smiles !

“ Now you must go to bed,” said Winter ; “ see, it is long past one—and that poor child has been in constant agitation all day—she has not a vestige of color in her cheeks.”

“ Indeed, my dear, you look ill—yes—you must go to bed,” observed his wife, with her usual kindly precision, which nothing but the actual excitement of the moment of meeting could break through, and which Kate recognized joyfully as an old friend.

“ The sober certainty of waking bliss,” may well be weighed against the agony of first waking after grief. And Kate lay for some time, the next morning, comparing this Sun-

day with the last ; then her thoughts flew to nurse, and she sprang up to communicate to her the joyful news of her emancipation.

“ Ah ! I have heart to write now.”

Winter and his wife soon asked for a fuller and more connected account than she had yet given them of her life since they had last met ; and though it cost her many tears, the recital did her good. How clearly through it all could she trace the guiding of Almighty love, ever hovering near to interpose its aid when the bowed spirit failed beneath its burden. No, they were not bitter tears she shed that morning. And, sometimes, her eyes would sparkle brightly through them, as she recounted nurse’s undeviating self-devotion and unfailing truth. She thought little of herself during the narration, nor dreamt it was the quiet, undaunted heroism, her words involuntarily displayed—the heroism of exhaustless love, careless of its own wealth, that drew such quick

sobs from Mrs. Winter, and made her good little husband wink his eyes, and blow his nose, so furtively, and so often.

Both the artist and his wife perceived there was some mystery attached to Kate's separation from Lady Desmond, into which they must not pry ; and so, with praiseworthy self-denial, accepted, unquestioned, the account she chose to give of her wish to be independent, &c., &c., &c.

“I feel I neglected you, my dear Kate,” said Winter, as she paused, wearied by her long recital, “but the perfect content of your last letter induced me, without any fixed plan, to ramble on and on, like some butterfly attracted from flower to flower, lost in a rich profusion of magnificent subjects. Madame bore it all wonderfully ; I owe her much for her patience ; and I intended every day, for the last six weeks, to write and tell you what time we had fixed on for our return, though I

fancied, from what you last said, that you and Lady Desmond intended to leave England, and ramble God knows where ; therefore, I always thought it better to wait ; as you were in good hands, a few weeks, one way or the other, would make no difference—so I loitered on, scarcely hoping to find you in England on my return ; at last we found ourselves at Gibralter, so late in the year, and so tired of knocking about, that we took the Peninsular and Oriental steamer, and, after a tedious passage, arrived here, as I told you, last Wednesday. In three weeks, I trust, the house in the Abbey-gardens will be free, and then, with God's blessing, we will keep Christmas thankfully in the old place—would you like this ?”

“ If you had read my most inmost wish for the coming season, which I so dreaded, it would be to spend it where I was so happy, and grand-papa so respected.”

“ But, my dear,” said Mrs. Winter to her

husband, "don't you think Kate ought to have advice? She changes color so, and her pulse is very irregular."

"My kind friend, no," said Kate, leaning her head on Mrs. Winter's shoulder, "*you* have brought me all I want—the sense of home. I will rest during the three weeks we are to be here—rest profoundly—and, at the end of that time, you shall have, please God, a rosy, cheerful—" she paused, and added, enquiringly, "daughter."

Winter took her hand, and pressed it gravely and affectionately, as if accepting her; his wife, kissed her cheek, and there was a silence of deep feeling.

"Now I must write."

"Who to?" asked Winter.

"Georgy and nurse."

"Very well; tell the latter (may she not, Sue?) that the moment we are settled at A—, We will summon her to wait on our daughter."

“ Yes—I shall be proud to have her about you, she is excellent,” returned his wife.

And Kate wrote. Oh, how vain all language to depict the gratitude with which she wrote ; yet she would fain have despatched an order for nurse’s immediate return to her ; but she was pleased, right well pleased, to have so near a prospect of re-union before her.

And peacefully did the days glide over, and pleasant too, though London wore its November gloom—without might be fog and damp, cold winds and muddy streets—within were bright fires and calm, full hearts. Kate, in spite of herself, felt, at times, restless to know more of Egerton, though she could not bring herself to speak of him ; but then she had so much to hear from Winter ; so many exquisite sketches to examine ; so much to discuss, relative to a picture he intended exhibiting next Spring ; new books, reviews, and music, amongst which to revel, so that her mind was well filled.

Langley and Mrs. Storey soon made their way to see her ; the latter was, undoubtedly, of great use to Mrs. Winter, and an unimpeachable authority on all matters connected with shopping ; they made endless excursions together, while Kate remained remained quietly at home, for a slight pain in the chest made Winter a little uneasy, and repose seemed now to her the greatest pleasure.

She had enjoyed nearly a week of this welcome rest, when the following letter from Lady Desmond was put into her hand—

“ Perhaps the only intelligence which could have gladdened my heart, was that conveyed by your letter, dearest Kate. At last, my eyes are opened, fully opened, to the culpable folly and injustice of my conduct. Now, when it is too late to spare you the suffering I have inflicted. If you could see how I loathe myself, you would weep for me. God gave me health, and riches, an unspotted name, and a fair

position ; I paid back no tithe of gratitude or duty—and after a life of self-indulgence—He gave me the gracious task to guard and cherish my benefactor's child—see how I have performed the one incumbent but pleasant duty placed so clearly before me—discarded it—rejected it, for an unholy phantom. Oh, Kate, Kate ! you are so patient, so good, so forgiving ; and I, as I write each excellence, seem to myself so base, and implacable, and imperious, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. But, thank God, your true, kind friends are restored to you—I see you are happy, and now I understand but too well why you remained so long at Carrington. Good Heavens ! to what have I not driven you —persuading myself that your own guilty conscience would not permit you to accept the invitations I compelled myself to make. I do not ask you to forgive me—I know you do ; but, oh, write to me—reconcile me to myself—I cannot rest. I wear myself out among these

wretched people whom I half envy for their absorption in mere physical suffering, and still I do not sleep. I want to see you, to hear your voice. Oh, I am wretched.

“Write to me again—say you are happy—it is all that can console me.

“Yours, as in our old days,

“G. DESMOND.”

Kate did not lose an hour in replying to this letter, she wrote with all the simple wisdom of a true, pure, loving heart. True, deep, unchanging sympathy, and judicious respect, breathed through every line, and at the conclusion she declared her readiness to join her cousin as soon as Christmas, (which she had faithfully promised to spend with the Winters) was over.

“Or you might visit A——,” she continued, “you would, I know, like my kind friends so much—you would enjoy Mr. Winter’s artistic

enthusiasm, and his wife's excellent quaintness. We shall have many pleasant days together yet, dearest Georgy, and leaving our faulty past in the hands of a merciful judge—help each other to live a better and a higher life for future."

Miss Vernon was here interrupted by the servant of the house, who came to say Mr. Winter was in the drawing-room, with a gentleman, and wanted her.

"Very well, I will be down in a moment," replied Miss Vernon, "I suppose it is Mr. Langley," she thought, as she hastily finished her letter, sealed and directed it, before descending to the drawing-room; the door was slightly open, and she heard a very clear quiet voice, which seemed familiar to her, say—

"No, I should not have given it up," she stopped a moment, then, without giving herself time for further cowardice, entered the room, and met an earnest, enquiring glance from Egerton's dark brown eyes.

Kate had a good deal of self-command, but it had been much tried of late ; she felt her heart stand still for a second, and then throb volently ; instinctively covering her eyes with one hand, she held out the other, silently, and it was quickly, warmly, yet gently, clasped in both of Egerton's.

“I fear we have startled you,” said he, calmly, with a certain tone of deep feeling in his voice, which acted on Kate's nerves like a restorative.

“Yes,” she replied, tremulously ; but recovering herself, and withdrawing her hand—“I had no idea who the gentleman was, they told me had come in with Mr. Winter—I am very glad to see you.” And she sat down feeling quite incapable of standing any longer. Egerton placed himself beside her, and Winter stood opposite, in a state of fume, against the stupidity of lodging-house servants.

“I told the thick-headed girl, as plainly as possible, Colonel Egerton, on purpose to pre-

pare you. I knew the memories—humph pooh,” and Winter stoped abruptly, for Egerton, whose eyes were fixed on Kate’s face, raised his hand significantly as he observed her changing colour.

And this was their first meeting—not very demonstrative, yet Kate was satisfied. Winter rattled on, apparently well pleased, but Egerton and Kate were very silent, the latter particularly so.

“ I was hurrying down Pall Mall, in hopes of catching Mrs. Winter before she started on any shopping expedition, when suddenly, an iron grasp on my shoulder arrested my progress. I just looked round, previous to calling the police, and saw Egerton’s face considerably browner than when last I beheld it—he was not very connected at first.”

“ No,” interrupted Egerton, “ I was breathless—I had just issued from my club, when I caught a glimpse of your well-remembered figure—to give chase was my first impulse—

better get into a scrape than miss the man I had been so long looking for, so here I am ; and are you quite well, Miss Vernon ? You look—”

“ You must not tell me I am looking ill,” said Kate, with something of her old archness, a soft smile playing round her lips, and dimpling her cheek, as a sudden gleam of sunshine calls forth a thousand diamond sparkles from the bosom of a sleeping lake.

“ You do not look well,” persisted Egerton, too earnest to be complimentary ; and then, strange to say, there was an awkward pause—their hearts were too full to speak on any common-place topic, and they dared not touch upon anything deeper.

Winter did good service, however, and at last Kate ventured to ask—

“ Have you been long in England, Captain—I mean Colonel Egerton.”

He smiled, his own bright smile—lip and eyes in unhesitating harmony.

“ Yes—call me Captain Egerton, it reminds me of old times and pleasant days. I arrived here nearly a month ago—I had been ordered home by the doctor, at the same time Mary, (my sister, Mrs. Wentworth), wrote requesting I would return, on account of Egerton’s health ; besides,” he added, with another smile, “ I was home-sick, and restless to learn more than letters could tell me. I was almost a fortnight at Allerton.”

“ So we heard on the rail-road,” interrupted Winter ; “ I mean, that you had been at Allerton. And so your brother is very ill ?”

Colonel Egerton shook his head.

“ Very painfully affected ; and, I fear, will never be much better. They want me to stay in England ; but I can really be of no use to him ; and as soon as I have refreshed myself, I mean to return to India, unless something very unforeseen occurs.”

“ Being his next heir,” began Winter.

“ Is no reason why I should waste my life,

waiting to step into my brother's shoes. As soon as I could get away from Allerton, I started for A——, hoping to find you and Mrs. Winter there. I knew," turning to Kate, and insensibly softening his tones, "that the Priory existed no more—at least, for me—but I knew Winter would always be in communication with you. Imagine my dismay, to find a stranger in possession of the hospitable house where I had been so well cared for. Do you know I felt confoundedly cut up. I could learn nothing satisfactory there, so I came on to Carrington, and put up for a night with the —— Hussars—old friends of mine. It was curious, Miss Vernon, how vividly the place reminded me of that ball. I felt a sort of certainty that you were near, and that I should meet you somehow. By the way, I went to hear the famous Doctor M—— preach before starting for town."

"I know," said Kate, quietly—"you sat three rows before me."

Egerton almost started from his seat in profound amazement.

“How! what! do you mean to say you were in the church, and I did not see you?”

“How extraordinary you did not mention this to me,” exclaimed Winter.

“I did not think—that is, I intended—and was always interrupted,” faltered Kate.

“And why! why did you not speak to me?” cried Egerton, eagerly.

“I could not, indeed! though I wished it much,” said Kate, with a simple earnestness, at which Egerton’s dark, embrowned cheek flushed with sudden pleasure. He did not pursue the subject then; but said, abruptly—

“I have felt bewildered at finding myself so suddenly talking to my old friends, or I could not have been so long without enquiring for Mrs. O’Toole. May I not see my good nurse? You know she is mine, as well as yours, Miss Vernon.”

“She is quite well; but alas! not with me;

she joins us, however, when we return to A——. Oh ! how glad she would be to see you again ! she was so fond of you."

"Not with you!"

Colonel Egerton was beginning in tones of no small surprise, when the door opened, and Mesdames Storey and Winter entered.

The greeting between Mrs. Winter and Egerton was considerably more demonstrative than any that had yet occurred ; the kind little woman was evidently touched by the genuine delight evinced by her quondam patient at seeing her ; and Winter smiled to see Colonel Egerton's more deep happiness take this method of expression ; Mrs. Storey simpered and curtsied and nodded to Kate, and was altogether, as she said, "quite taken with Colonel Egerton ;" and sat on till her friends wished her far away. The conversation was, therefore, general ; and Miss Vernon unusually silent.

Egerton felt he could make no enquiries

then, so rose to leave, having paid an unconscionably long visit.

“I have a letter for nurse,” said he to Kate, “which my ignorance of her whereabouts has prevented my forwarding; if you will allow me, I will bring it here to-morrow morning, and hear all about her, and everything. I have so many questions to ask; but I promised to see Sir J. M—— at the Horse Guards to-day, and must go. I presume you are visible early?”

“Can’t you join us at dinner, a lodging-house scramble? but, I suppose, an old campaigner as you are, can rough it,” said Winter, with eager hospitality, that startled his precise wife.

“With the greatest pleasure,” cried Eger-ton, in his old, gay, frank manner. “I was just wishing you would ask me.”

Winter and Kate smiled; and Mrs. Storey opened her eyes, astonished at so cool an admission.

“*Au revoir, then,*” continued Colonel Eger-ton, taking his hat, and bowing. “I will bring you the letter, Miss Vernon.”

“Is five o’clock too early?” shouted Win-ter, after him, as he ran down stairs.

“No, not the least.”

“Sharp, five then.”

“Humph, ha,” said Winter, rubbing his hands together, as he returned to the room; “that’s a fine fellow—no nonsense about him—though he nearly knocked me over this morning. I am glad his brother never mar-ried. Fred will make a first-rate member of the Upper House yet.”

“But, my dear John, how you could be so thoughtless as to ask such a fine gentleman—accustomed to the style he is—to a scrambling dinner with us, in a couple of hours. I’m sure I do not know where to turn.”

Mrs. Storey looked truly sympathising.

“Pooh, pooh, my dear, give him a chop and a jam tart; anything—he will be satisfied, I’ll

engage ; surely you must remember how easily pleased he was at A——.”

“Easily pleased, Mr. Winter ! I am not so sure of that ! a much more fastidious man might be pleased with the table we kept at A——.”

Winter pulled a long face, expressive of contrition for his fault ; and Kate interposed her soothing influence.

“Colonel Egerton was too glad to see you, and to come to you, to be *difficile*.”

“Well, Mr. Winter, I must go home before it is quite dark,” said Mrs. Storey.

“And I will escort you, my dear madam, to the omnibus—where can I catch Langley ?” asked Winter.

“Oh, at his house ; he goes out very little.”

So Mrs. Storey and her cavalier departed, while Mrs. Winter disappeared to hold deep council with the landlady, and Kate was left alone to revel in her own thoughts ; gaily they careered away over the far future, yet vaguely

and indistinctly. Nurse and Georgy—the Winters and herself, and Egerton, were to be always happy together in some universal bond of fellowship; but she did not arrive at probabilities, they half startled her; she almost shrank from the whisper of her heart—“He loves me, he always loved me.” There was something too positive, too bold in such thoughts! And so a thousand, bright, kaliede-scope visions kept forming themselves round a delightful nucleus presented by the simple sentence—

“Colonel Egerton is to dine here to-day!”

Long, very long it was, since she had dared to indulge thus in reverie; and even while she raised her heart in unspoken gratitude to the Giver of good for her great deliverance, the thought rose to her lips—

“If dear grandpapa had but lived, to see a return of so much happiness! Ah, why was he taken in the midst of such heavy times?”

These reflections calmed the agitation which

made each nerve tremulous, and she anticipated Egerton's return less anxiously.

“I long to talk to him of grandpapa; but I am afraid of crying so very much, it would distress him.”

Here Mrs. Winter entered, quite restored to good humour, as Kate dimly perceived by the fire-light.

“The woman of the house was so obliging; and it was so fortunate, the gentleman in the front parlour had gone out of town for a few days, and they could dine there; and an excellent pastry-cook at the corner of the street would supply all deficiencies. And, my dear, it is almost five o'clock, if you are going to smooth your hair, and wash your hands before dinner.”

If—of course she intended to do so.

It was many a long day since she looked in the glass and brushed her glossy hair so carefully. She was not satisfied—no, she looked so pale, so unlike her old bright self. She

little thought how amply the brightness was compensated by the pensive sweetness that deepened and softened the gentle gravity of her face, and the species of languor that lent such tender grace to her slight form. Never had Egerton admired her so much—he had left a bright, saucy girl, and found a lovely woman.

Winter returned with Langley, whom he had caught, for dinner; and the little party had scarcely assembled, when Colonel Egerton was announced; they were sitting by the light of a bright fire, and Miss Vernon, leaning back quietly on the cushions of the sofa, was amused by the contrast between Egerton's fine figure and air noble, Winter's stumpy form, and Langley's awkward length; nor did Fred refrain from stealing glances at the graceful outline of Kate's black dress, which threw into strong relief the pure fairness of her throat and hands, a delicate colour tinged her cheek, and a certain holy look of happiness deepened the expression of her liquid eyes.

Egerton handed Mrs. Winter down to dinner, and Kate followed with Winter. The repast was unimpeachable ; but no one took any notice of its arrangements. Much was said by the gentlemen ; but the ladies were rather silent. Egerton was all polished cordiality. A look of frank joy, which he cared little to disguise, lighted up his bronzed countenance and dark brown eyes ; there was a degree of decision and authority in his manner and opinions, that they perhaps wanted before, as if he had read, and thought, and acted much since last he had dined with them ; and Kate observed that Winter insensibly treated him with greater respect and less startling abruptness. Langley was never much impressed with any man ; and the trio discussed Spain and India most agreeably, Colonel Egerton described simply and forcibly his visit to the cave Temples of Elora ; and this led to the Hindoo Trinity, and the strange, rude, imperfect shadowing of the Christian doctrines con-

tained in it ; and then they rambled on to the universal ideas prevalent in all Pagan lands, and the German theories on this subject, and on languages ; of the traces of the moors in Spain, and the Alhambra, &c. And on all these topics Egerton led instead of listening, as in former times.

“ If I could only persuade Mrs. Winter,” said her husband, as she and Kate rose to leave the room, “ to write and publish her experiences of Spain, the world would learn some startling facts. She used to endeavour to teach the girls to work, while I was sketching for my individual gratification. And as she picked up some colloquial Spanish, she heard strange revelations, beating Borrow’s Bible in Spain all to nothing.”

“ My dear, how can you talk so ! it was only the Muleteer’s sister, poor girl ! and she knew a little English, near Gibralter, you know.”

“ With all the roughing she bore so well

abroad," resumed Winter, "the moment she returned to England, heigh presto ! the spell of nicety was on her. Man may be free the moment his foot touches British ground ; but, Carambo ! woman is trammelled forthwith by particularity and regularity, and no end of arities ; she was afraid she should not be able to give you a sufficiently *recherché* dinner, Colonel, on so short—"

" My dear John, how can you—"

" Mrs. Winter knew I could not forget all the dainties with which she used to tempt me, when I was such a troublesome invalid under her care, and wished to surprise me with them here," said Egerton, with a smile full of kindly recollection.

" Never mind, Sue," cried Winter, as she retired ; " Spain is a country too full of splendid colouring to be clean ; nor is it necessary there—*Dormire coi cani per levarsi colle pulci.*"

" Well, my love, I think everything went on very smoothly," said Mrs. Winter, as she

settled herself for her nap before the gentlemen made their appearance.

“Very well indeed,” returned Kate, vaguely, her eyes gazing far away into dream-land.

The gentlemen soon followed them; and once more Kate handed a cup of tea to Egerton, their eyes met as he took it, and a tear started to Kate’s, as the familiar action brought the memory of her grandfather vividly before her.

“I have so much to say to you—so much to enquire of you,” said Egerton, in a low tone, placing himself beside her; “but I must see you alone; I dare not agitate you with reminiscences so sad before a stranger, or indeed any third person.”

“Yes, I have much to tell you,” returned Miss Vernon, tremulously.

“It is a great mystery to me, the absence of nurse; I do not half like it,” resumed Egerton. “I have brought you the letter from her son.”

‘Thank you ; I will forward it to-morrow. She will join me at A——. We return there in about a fortnight.’

“It was a most extraordinary occurrence,” said Egerton, slowly stirring his cup round and round, “that I should have been in the same church with you at Carrington, and not know it. Why did you not speak to me—call to me—shy a prayer-book at my head ! anything, rather than let me miss the good of which I was in search ?”

Kate smiled, and shood her head.

“What a stupid numskull I was not to translate the instinctive feeling of your presence correctly, instead of pooh-poohing it away, after our friend Winter’s fashion ; however, all’s well now. Give my kindest remembrance to Mrs. O’Toole when you write.”

“Certainly,” said Kate, “I shall not fail.”

“Your cousin, Lady Desmond, is in Ireland, so Burton told me ; he is a capital fellow ; but Dashwood was away, God knows where ; and

he was the only person it appears who had any trace of you. Do you know where he is?"

"No, he told me he was going to fish in Ireland when I saw him last."

"So Lord Effingham is off to St. Petersburgh, Miss Vernon," said Langley, at this juncture.

Kate felt that Fred's eye was on her, and coloured deeply, as she merely bowed in assent.

"Curious place to winter in," he continued.

Then Winter made some observations about the freezing of the Neva, and the Russian costume; and he and Langley talked on for a good while standing on the hearth-rug, and sipping their tea; but Egerton was silent, for some time; and Kate did not like to look at him; at last he asked—

"Do you ever sing now?"

"Oh yes," answered Mrs. Winter for her.

“Sing that pretty new song you got yesterday, my love.”

“No, no,” cried Egerton, eagerly, “an old one for me—dare I ask for ‘The Serenade,’ if it would not distress you. I have so often longed to hear it again.”

“I will try,” said Kate; “but—”

She went to the piano, and struck the well-remembered arpeggio chords so long unheard; she strove to steady her voice, as it rose tremulous with its rich sweetness and deep expression; Egerton leant on the piano, wrapt in memory and contemplation. Kate proceeded very well to the end of the first verse; but there, at the sustained note to which her grandfather had so loved to listen, she faltered, paused, and covering her face with both her hands, for an instant, hastily left the room.

She was thoroughly overcome; and, exhausted by the excitement of the day, returned no more that evening.

Colonel Egerton came the next day, and the next, and the next. Mr. and Mrs. Winter, or Mrs. Storey, or some snuffy picture dealer was always there, and he was reduced, *malgré lui*, to talk of generalities, this constraint gave something of coolness and gravity to his manner ; he was often *distract* ; and Kate felt less calm.

Meanwhile Mrs. O'Toole's letters were filled with the rapturous expectation of a reunion with her *Darlint*, and could scarce be induced to wait until the time specified for her return by Winter.

Kate was re-reading one of her characteristic epistles one morning after Mr. and Mrs. Winter had departed on some common errand. She had a slight cold, and was ordered by her kind authoritative *maestro* to keep in doors ; they had not been gone many minutes when Egerton came in, carrying a large bouquet of hot-house flowers.

“ I have just met Winter, and his *cara sposa* ;

they told me you were on the sick list. How is that?"

"A cold—oh, nothing; but what beautiful flowers. I have suffered much from a dearth of flowers."

"I wrote to my sister, who is at present at Allerton, to send me a basket full, they have tolerable conservatories there."

"You are very kind; I will ring for a vase or bowl, or something to put them in, Mrs. Winter will be delighted with them."

"Yes, but they are for you."

The little bustle of arranging the graceful gift proceeded pleasantly. Egerton lounged on the sofa. Kate stood by the table, now consulting him as to their arrangement, and touching them with a tender, admiring care, that showed their appreciation of their rare beauty; gradually, as the task was accomplished, they glided into talk of former times; and Egerton spoke with such feeling of the sudden shock

her grandfather's death had been to him, that Kate, unspeakably gratified by the reverent affection he expressed, was drawn on to give some account of his last moments, and how the old hound died when relieved from his watch. She spoke tremblingly, yet with wonderful composure; Egerton listened in motionless attention.

"I shall never, never forget the night he died," she continued, unconsciously playing with a leaf, and still standing by the table. Egerton had risen, and was leaning against the mantel-piece. "He had seemed better, that day, and happier, and I sat watching him by the fire-light as he lay, asleep, as I thought, in his chair, long after he was gone from me." She shuddered slightly. "I had been dreaming of better times for him, perhaps a return to the Priory; but it was soon broken, my dream! and then Georgy was away, and the Winters, and I was, so alone! I had none,

no, not one near me, that I loved, except poor nurse."

She stopped to recover herself; Egerton, springing to her side, took her hand in both his,

"Kate! long-loved, dearest, you have indeed been sad and weary; give me the right to be beside you, come sorrow or joy; I cannot bear to think of your being grieved and alone, while I, who so pined for a glimpse of you, was far away. Let me hold you to my heart, and shelter you from the roughness of life, or share its burdens with you. My beautiful one! be my wife, and come what may, we will bear it with the strength of two hearts."

He drew her to him, close, close, and she leaned her hand upon his shoulder, murmuring,

"I always wished you to be there, *he* loved you so much."

Where was sorrow, or fear, or doubt? "Where the evil that could touch her now that she had reached the haven where she

would be?" vanished before the genial sunshine of Egerton's love.

One long, fond, gentle kiss, before she extricated herself from his embrace, no longer her own, but pledged to be his while God granted them life, though she had scarce breathed an articulate syllable.

The daylight was beginning to fade before Winter and his wife returned, and still they talked of the past, and planned for the future, and opened their inmost souls to each other; and Kate, the first strange, bewildering, emotion of finding every shadow of reserve swept from between herself and Egerton was gradually growing calmer; his voice stilling her heart to the deep tranquillity of perfect contempt.

A glance on his entrance told Winter the state of affairs better, indeed, than Egerton's incoherent explanation.

We have reached the climax of our story, not much remains to be told, already its simple

annals have spread themselves out too far ; patience, but little remains.

*To Mrs. O'Toole, Fermoy, Ireland.*

“The day-dawn has indeed come at last, brightly and softly, dearest nurse, true friend ! Soon, soon we shall meet, and you will have two nurselings. Oh, I am so strangely happy. The good God has sent us such joy ; for you and I always were joyful or sad together. Ah, I can no longer speak of myself alone ; I have another self, a better, nobler, stronger self. A true heart to lean upon. The wish you have never openly expressed will be accomplished, my own nurse. I have promised to be his wife. Colonel Egerton’s, of whom grandpapa was so fond ; he would be proud and glad if he knew it ; and dare we say he does not ? I yearn to hear your voice, and that you too should bask in the sunshine, after such a long sad winter ; for he is so fond of you, and always calls you his nurse. But in a very few

days you will be with me again. We go to A—— on the 30th ; be there to meet us. Everything is as yet very unsettled ; but I write to you first, before any one. I cannot tell you anything clearly now, only you are to be always with me, and I do not think we shall leave England.

“Dear nurse, how wildly I have written, my hand is so unsteady, and my heart beats ; but, nurse, you must bend your knees before God, and pray to Him to be with us now in this great trial of prosperity, even as He stayed us in our time of adversity.

Ever your loving child,

KATE.

“Who are you writing to, Kate?” asked Egerton, jealously watching her endeavouring to hide a tear that fell upon the paper as he entered the room.

“To nurse, but you must not see it.”

“*Cativa*—I have no such wild ambition, but

keep it till to-morrow, I want to add a postscript."

"Yes but no later, she will be so proud to hear from you."

Egerton's talk over pounds shillings and pence with Winter gave that worthy great satisfaction. "I am not rich," said the young colonel, "but I have a moderate competence with the prize money that has fallen to my share, my military appointments and the certainty as to the future, although it springs, unfortunately, from my poor brother's state of health; besides, Kate is so differently situated now compared to what she was when I tore myself away from England. I can never forget your fatherly kindness to my bride elect."

"I trust you will not think of taking her to India."

"I should prefer staying at home now; I dread the climate for her; yes, in all probability I shall remain at home; it would be a hard trial to part from you and her cousin; by the way I

cannot quite make out that Lady Desmond," and the two friends proceeded to discuss and elucidate very near the truth of Kate's well preserved secret.

"Now then my Kate," said Egerton, looking up from his writing the next morning and holding out his hand," come here, I have a clearer conscience than you, you may read my postscript; to be sure as it is to a lady you have a right."

She took the paper from his hand, and standing by him read as follows, while he leant his arm on the table and gazed in her face.

"My dear nurse, Miss Kate will not let me see what she has written, so I must write for myself."

"I have felt deeply your truth and fidelity to one very dear to me, and I can assure you, as long as I have a home to offer you, none after my wife will be more welcome there than yourself, but as ladies are changeable, (at least they tell me so), and you might possibly at some

future day choose a house of your own, the enclosed is a rough draft of a deed now in preparation, securing to you an annuity, which will I trust, render you tolerably independent for the remainder of your days. I consider that in doing this I merely act as the executor of your late lamented master, think that you owe it to him and look upon me as still your debtor for unlimited care and kindness when I require it.

Yours with sincere regard,

FRED. B. EGERTON.

We dare not tell how Kate expressed her entire approbation of this letter; severe ladies may be shocked, and we have a great respect for them. She was no prude, and Egerton had strong nerves, so no one need trouble themselves further on the subject.

All arrangements and projects were however broken up, shortly before the Winters and their now blooming adopted daughter, left town for A——. A telegraphic despatch from Allerton announced the sudden return of Lord Egerton's

paralytic seizure, and summoned his brother to what soon proved to be a death-bed scene. The peer showed symptoms of satisfaction when his discarded brother took his place by his bed side, but he was speechless, and after a week's suffering breathed his last.

Meantime Kate and her kind friends reached their old home, the sense of happiness tempered the solemn tidings of Lord Egerton's death which reached them as they left London.

Kate could not repress a shudder as the shout of "Carrington, Carrington, change here for Batten Wiggem, Manchester," met her ear; she looked at Winter and silently raised her eyes to Heaven.

Mrs. O'Toole had been some days installed at Abbey Gardens previous to their return, and as Kate caught the first glimpse of her, the white apron, and the snowy cap, the black gown and the eager, straining look, the attitude all the same, exactly the same, as the sad day she had bid her good bye, her heart bounded within her

at the contrast. How she clung to her and kissed her, and smothered her wrinkled cheeks with her fair soft hands, and would not let her out of her sight for a moment, and pleased herself by waiting on her.

“Sure, I could’nt answer yer letther, the way I’d like, core iv my heart,” said Mrs. O’Toole to Kate, when they were alone ;” nor the Captin’s, (me Lord’s I mane) will ye write wan fur me asthore ; he’ll think I have’nt a screed iv gratitude in me afther him settlin a fortin on me.”

“I will, dear nurse, but he will be here soon, and then you can speak to him yourself ; he must be at Allerton now on account of his poor brother’s death, it was so sudden at last.”

“Well, the Lord, rest his soul ! sure it’s better for him to be in happiness in heaven than down here, standin’ in the captin’s way,” returned nurse, cheerfully.

“For shame, nurse, you must not speak so.”

“ Och, thin, core iv my heart, but ye look well ; there’s the light iv joy in your eyes, an’ on yer lips again. See what a power if happiness the Blessed Saviour was storin’ up for us, all the time we wor in sorra. An’ many’s the time I grumbled because things didn’t go my way. Sure, if I’d the pick iv the world, I’d choose the captin (I mane me Lord) fur a husband fur ye ; it’s he that has the warm heart, an’ the open hand !—an’ what ’ll ye be, asthore ?—a duchess or a countess !

“ Only a viscountess, and even then that seems very strange.”

“ A vi-countess ; that’s something betune thim, anyways.” Kate laughed. “ An’ whin will me Lord be here ?”

“ Not till after his brother’s funeral, of course.”

“ They’ll have a grand berrin,” concluded Mrs. O’Toole, meditatively.

The new peer, as may be anticipated, joined

them as soon as it was possible, and a joyful sight it was to see his greeting with Mrs. O'Toole, who was the same with the viscount as she had been with the captain. He stopped to shake hands with her most cordially and energetically at the foot of the stairs, even though Kate was waiting for him at the top.

Och ! many's the time me ould eyes wur wearyin' to see you when we wur in throuble ; many's the time me sweet child wanted ye ; but, glory be to God, you'll be beside her for ever from this out, captin, agra ! Me lord, I mane."

" I'll never forgive you if you change the title, nurse. I was not perfectly content till I saw your honest face ; but now, indeed, I feel I am amongst my old friends again."

" An' sure aint I a brute not to thank you fur the fortin ; it's bewildhered I am entirely ; yer a prence, so ye are."

" Well nurse, never mind ; I can't stop now,

for you see there's Miss Kate waiting for me ; we'll have a long talk to-morrow," cried Eger-ton, springing up the stairs.

The news of Kate's approaching happiness did more to comfort Lady Desmond, and soothe her vexed spirit, than whole libraries of sound reasoning and good advice could have done ; nor was it difficult to prevail on her to join them ; and so the interval demanded by business and etiquette sped away, and long before winter had yielded to the coming spring, a quiet, happy wedding party assembled at the old church. Mr. Winter was there, for the first time in his life, perhaps, in white gloves ; Lady Desmond ; and the Wentworths, gay, polished, kind-hearted triflers, all charmed with their new sister ; and Burton, gravely observant, looked on contentedly ; and Mrs. Winter rather nervous at the thoughts of entertaining so goodly a company.

And Mrs. O'Toole, though the wedding was peculiarly quiet, was satisfied, perfectly, as she

removed the long, graceful veil from her child's head, and replaced it with a travelling bonnet, ejaculating, "If mee blessed masther could look down from heaven, it's he that would be proud an' happy. Sure he sees us this blessed minnit!"

Our tale is ended, and Kate Vernon merged in "The Viscountess Egerton."

We may not promise that her future will be all unclouded, but, at least, she has a true, strong heart—a bold, clear spirit to aid her through the rugged paths of life ; to stand beside her in the storm, and finally, to glide with her into the calm, still evening of time.

Lady Desmond is still a widow ; she passes much of her time amongst her hitherto uncared-for tenantry, and her happiest hours are spent in the pleasant circle collected at Allerton.

Colonel Dashwood is married to a fair, bright girl, younger by a good many years than himself, who looks up to him as a perfect Chevalier Bayard.

Bruton remains a determined old bachelor. The Winters are well, happy, and prosperous, as they deserve to be.

It was in the height of the high season of 1851, as we endeavoured to "move round," in obedience to the imperious mandate of the policeman on duty, at the case containing the celebrated Kooh-i-noor, in the Crystal Palace, that our attention was attracted by the consequential air of an elderly female, decidedly *en-bonpoint*, and well to do in the world, as evidenced by her substantial black silk dress and bonnet, and rich scarlet shawl.

"An', so that's the Kooh-i-noor, is it?" remarked the old lady in audible accents, whether addressed to an individual companion or to the crowd generally, we do not pretend to decide.

"Athen, it's mighty like a lump iv glass hangin' to a lusthre; faith the ould masther had a dimint he used to wear an his breast at Dungar, in the good ould times, that this wan, for all it's so big, couldn't hould a candle to;

but it's not every one ud know the differ. It's kilt entirely I am with the haite ; an' mee lady"—and we gradually lost the words, though we struggled after the retreating figure, till we saw her respectfully handed, by a tall footman in a handsome livery, into a coronetted chariot, from whence beamed a lovely, happy face we remembered well.

The thread is spun, the web is woven—a parting quotation, and we have done :—

*Saunders's News-Letter* (we omit the precise date) lately contained the following paragraph :—

“ We understand the Dungar property, in the county of —, so long the subject of litigation, has been purchased by Viscount Egerton, of Allerton, under the Incumbered Estates' Court. Lady Egerton is, we believe, the grand-daughter and heiress-at-law of the late owner, the well-known and universally respected Colonel D'Arcy Vernon.”

“ Ay,” said a thick little artist, who had

withdrawn his thumb from his palette to open a newspaper directed to him in a delicate female hand, as he read this paragraph—"So the wheel goes round, but it is not every day it brings up, sparkling over the dull surface of life, so bright and pure a gem as Kate Vernon."

THE END.









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